

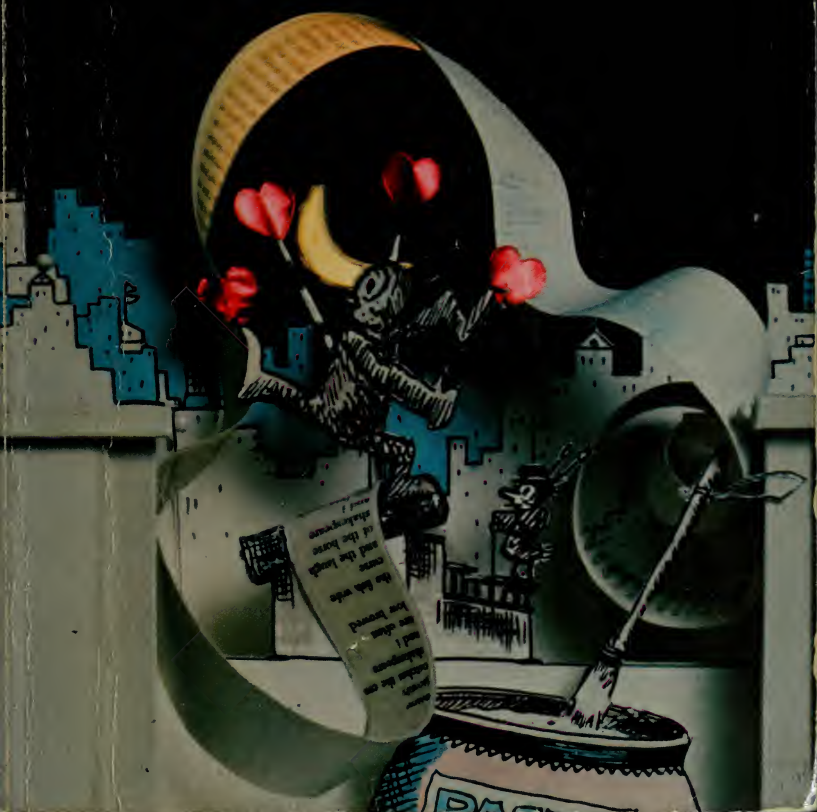
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# archy and mehitabel

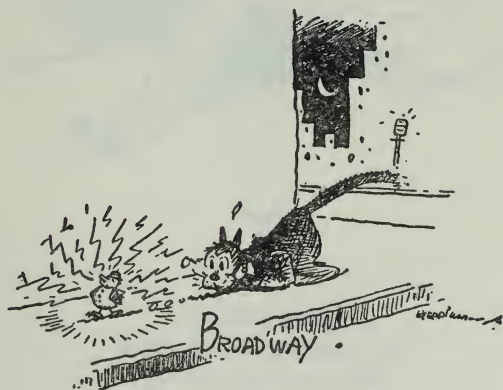
by don marquis



Williams  
5/26/73

Mr. & Mrs. Lyle Williams  
1954 Rose Lane  
Pleasant Hill, CA 94523

archy and mehitabel



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*the lives and times of archy and mehitabel*,  
available in a hardcover edition



# archy and mehitabel

by

don marquis



dolphin books  
doubleday & company, inc.  
garden city, new york

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dedicated to babs  
with babs knows what  
and babs knows why

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## acknowledgment

the author is indebted to the proprietors of the new york sun, the new york herald-tribune, new york herald-tribune magazine and p. f. collier and son company for permission to reprint these sketches.

## APPENDIX

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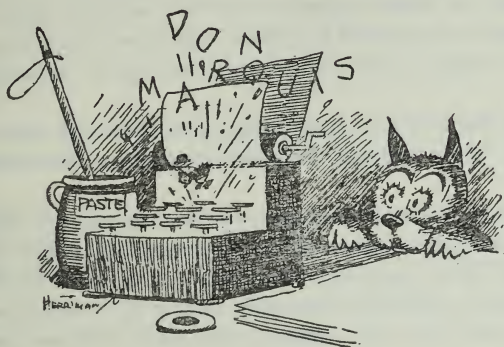
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## the coming of archy

The circumstances of Archy's first appearance are narrated in the following extract from the *Sun Dial* column of the *New York Sun*.

Dobbs Ferry possesses a rat which slips out of his lair at night and runs a typewriting machine in a garage. Unfortunately, he has always been interrupted by the watchman before he could produce a complete story.

It was at first thought that the power which made the typewriter run was a ghost, instead of a rat. It seems likely to us that it was both a ghost and a rat. Mme. Blavatsky's ego went into a white horse after she passed over, and someone's personality has undoubtedly gone into this rat. It is an era of belief in communications from the spirit land.

And since this matter had been reported in the public prints and seriously received we are no longer afraid of being ridiculed, and we do not mind making a statement of something that happened to our own typewriter only a couple of weeks ago.

We came into our room earlier than usual in the morning, and discovered a gigantic cockroach jumping about upon the keys.

He did not see us, and we watched him. He would climb painfully upon the framework of the machine and cast himself with all his force upon a key, head downward, and his weight and the impact of the blow were just sufficient to operate the machine, one slow letter after another. He could not work the

archy and mehitabel

capital letters, and he had a great deal of difficulty operating the mechanism that shifts the paper so that a fresh line may be started. We never saw a cockroach work so hard or perspire so freely in all our lives before. After about an hour of this frightfully difficult literary labor he fell to the floor exhausted, and we saw him creep feebly into a nest of the poems which are always there in profusion.

Congratulating ourself that we had left a sheet of paper in the machine the night before so that all this work had not been in vain, we made an examination, and this is what we found:

expression is the need of my soul  
i was once a vers libre bard  
but i died and my soul went into the body of a cockroach  
it has given me a new outlook upon life

i see things from the under side now  
thank you for the apple peelings in the wastepaper basket  
but your paste is getting so stale i can t eat it  
there is a cat here called mehitabel i wish you would have removed she nearly ate me the other night why don t she catch rats that is what she is supposed to be for  
there is a rat here she should get without delay

most of these rats here are just rats  
but this rat is like me he has a human soul in him  
he used to be a poet himself  
night after night i have written poetry for you  
on your typewriter  
and this big brute of a rat who used to be a poet comes out of his hole when it is done  
and reads it and sniffs at it  
he is jealous of my poetry  
he used to make fun of it when we were both human  
he was a punk poet himself  
and after he has read it he sneers  
and then he eats it



i wish you would have mehitabel kill that rat  
 or get a cat that is onto her job  
 and i will write you a series of poems showing how things look  
 to a cockroach  
 that rat s name is freddy  
 the next time freddy dies i hope he won t be a rat  
 but something smaller i hope i will be a rat  
 in the next transmigration and freddy a cockroach  
 i will teach him to sneer at my poetry then

don t you ever eat any sandwiches in your office  
 i haven t had a crumb of bread for i don t know how long  
 or a piece of ham or anything but apple parings  
 and paste leave a piece of paper in your machine  
 every night you can call me archy





READS IT AND  
SNIFFS AT IT.

ii

mehitabel was once cleopatra

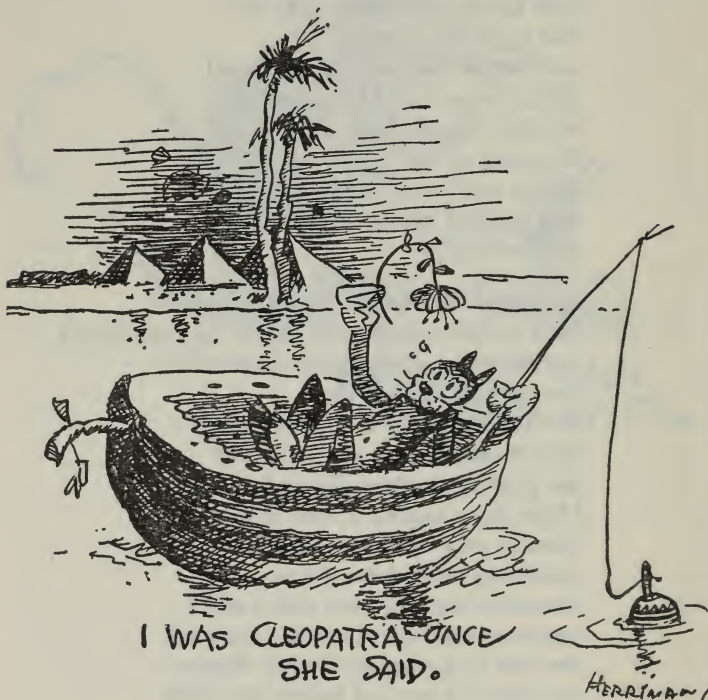
boss i am disappointed in  
some of your readers they  
are always asking how does  
archy work the shift so as to get a  
new line or how does archy do  
this or do that they  
are always interested in technical  
details when the main question is  
whether the stuff is  
literature or not  
i wish you would leave  
that book of george moore s on  
the floor

mehitabel the cat and i want to  
read it i have discovered that  
mehitabel s soul formerly inhabited a  
human also at least that  
is what mehitabel is claiming these  
days it may be she got jealous of  
my prestige anyhow she and  
i have been talking it over in a  
friendly way who were you  
mehitabel i asked her i was  
cleopatra once she said well i said i  
suppose you lived in a palace you bet  
she said and what lovely fish dinners  
we used to have and licked her chops

archy and mehitabel

mehitabel would sell her soul for  
a plate of fish any day i told her i thought  
you were going to say you were  
the favorite wife of the emperor  
valerian he was some cat nip eh  
mehitabel but she did not get me

archy





## the song of mehitabel

this is the song of mehitabel  
of mehitabel the alley cat  
as i wrote you before boss  
mehitabel is a believer  
in the pythagorean  
theory of the transmigration  
of the soul and she claims  
that formerly her spirit  
was incarnated in the body  
of cleopatra  
that was a long time ago  
and one must not be  
surprised if mehitabel  
has forgotten some of her  
more regal manners

i have had my ups and downs  
but wotthehell wotthehell  
yesterday sceptres and crowns  
fried oysters and velvet gowns  
and today i herd with bums  
but wotthehell wotthehell  
i wake the world from sleep  
as i caper and sing and leap  
when i sing my wild free tune  
wotthehell wotthehell

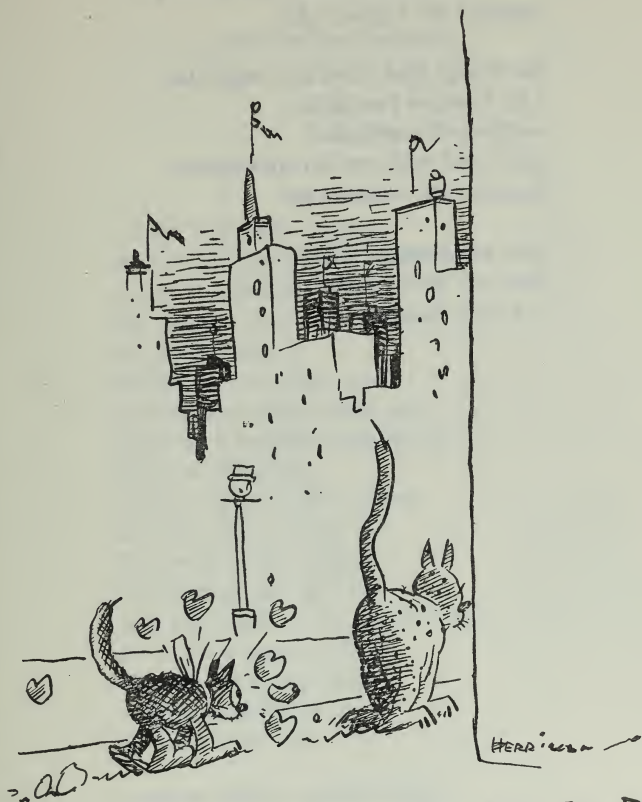
archy and mehitabel

under the bleary eyed moon  
i am pelted with cast off shoon  
but wotthehell wotthehell

do you think that i would change  
my present freedom to range  
for a castle or moated grange  
wotthehell wotthehell  
cage me and i d go frantic  
my life is so romantic  
capricious and corybantic  
and i m toujours gai toujours gai

i know that i am bound  
for a journey down the sound  
in the midst of a refuse mound  
but wotthehell wotthehell  
oh i should worry and fret  
death and i will coquette  
there s a dance in the old dame yet  
toujours gai toujours gai

i once was an innocent kit  
wotthehell wotthehell  
with a ribbon my neck to fit  
and bells tied onto it  
o wotthehell wotthehell  
but a maltese cat came by  
with a come hither look in his eye  
and a song that soared to the sky  
and wotthehell wotthehell  
and i followed adown the street  
the pad of his rhythmical feet  
o permit me again to repeat  
wotthehell wotthehell



I FOLLOWED A DOWN THE ST. THE PAD  
OF HIS RHYTHMICAL FT.

archy and mehitabel

my youth i shall never forget  
but there s nothing i really regret  
wotthehell wotthehell  
there s a dance in the old dame yet  
toujours gai toujours gai

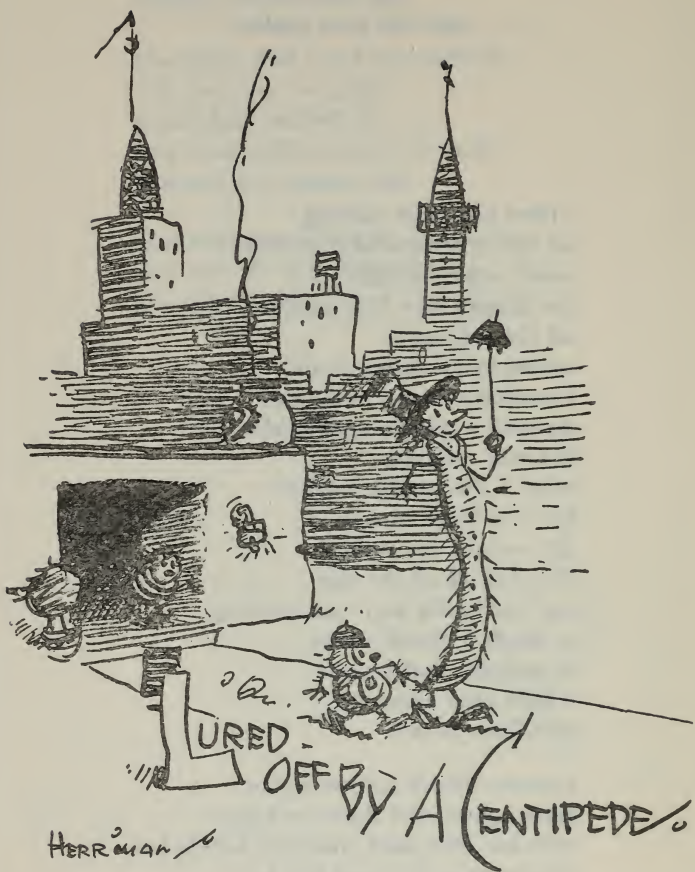
the things that i had not ought to  
i do because i ve gotto  
wotthehell wotthehell  
and i end with my favorite motto  
toujours gai toujours gai

boss sometimes i think  
that our friend mehitabel  
is a trifle too gay

## pity the poor spiders

i have just been reading  
an advertisement of a certain  
roach exterminator  
the human race little knows  
all the sadness it  
causes in the insect world  
i remember some weeks ago  
meeting a middle aged spider  
she was weeping  
what is the trouble i asked  
her it is these cursed  
fly swatters she replied  
they kill off all the flies  
and my family and i are starving  
to death it struck me as  
so pathetic that i made  
a little song about it  
as follows to wit

twas an elderly mother spider  
grown gaunt and fierce and gray  
with her little ones crouched beside her  
who wept as she sang this lay  
curses on these here swatters  
what kills off all the flies  
for me and my little daughters  
unless we eats we dies





archy and mehitabel

swattin and swattin and swattin  
tis little else you hear  
and we ll soon be dead and forgotten  
with the cost of living so dear

my husband he up and left me  
lured off by a centipede  
and he says as he bereft me  
tis wrong but i ll get a feed

and me a working and working  
scouring the streets for food  
faithful and never shirking  
doing the best i could

curses on these here swatters  
what kills off all the flies  
me and my poor little daughters  
unless we eats we dies

only a withered spider  
feeble and worn and old  
and this is what  
you do when you swat  
you swatters cruel and cold

i will admit that some  
of the insects do not lead  
noble lives but is every  
man s hand to be against them  
yours for less justice  
and more charity

archy

mehitabel s extensive past

mehitabel the cat claims that  
 she has a human soul  
 also and has transmigrated  
 from body to body and it  
 may be so boss you  
 remember i told you she accused  
 herself of being cleopatra once i  
 asked her about antony

anthony who she asked me are  
 you thinking of that  
 song about rowley and gammon and  
 spinach heigho for anthony rowley

no i said mark antony the  
 great roman the friend of  
 caesar surely cleopatra you  
 remember j caesar

listen archy she said i  
 have been so many different  
 people in my time and met  
 so many prominent gentlemen i  
 won t lie to you or stall i  
 do get my dates mixed sometimes  
 think of how much i have had a  
 chance to forget and i have



archy and mehitabel

always made a point of not  
carrying grudges over  
from one life to the next archy

i have been  
used something fierce in my time but  
i am no bum sport archy  
i am a free spirit archy i  
look on myself as being  
quite a romantic character oh the  
queens i have been and the  
swell feeds i have ate  
a cockroach which you are  
and a poet which you used to be  
archy couldn t understand  
my feelings at having come  
down to this i have  
had bids to elegant feeds where poets  
and cockroaches would  
neither one be mentioned without a  
laugh archy i have had  
adventures but i  
have never been an adventuress  
one life up and the next life  
down archy but always a lady  
through it all and a  
good mixer too always the  
life of the party archy but never  
anything vulgar always free footed  
archy never tied down to  
a job or housework yes looking  
back on it all i can say is  
i had some romantic  
lives and some elegant times i  
have seen better days archy but  
what s the use of kicking kid it s  
all in the game like a gentleman  
friend of mine used to say

archy and mehitabel

toujours gai kid toujours gai he  
was an elegant cat he used  
to be a poet himself and he made up  
some elegant poetry about me and him

let s hear it i said and  
mehitabel recited

persian pussy from over the sea  
demure and lazy and smug and fat  
none of your ribbons and bells for me  
ours is the zest of the alley cat  
over the roofs from flat to flat  
we prance with capers corybantic  
what though a boot should break a slat  
mehitabel us for the life romantic

we would rather be rowdy and gaunt and free  
and dine on a diet of roach and rat

roach i said what do you  
mean roach interrupting mehitabel  
yes roach she said that s the  
way my boy friend made it up  
i climbed in amongst the typewriter  
keys for she had an excited  
look in her eyes go on mehitabel i  
said feeling safer and she  
resumed her elocution

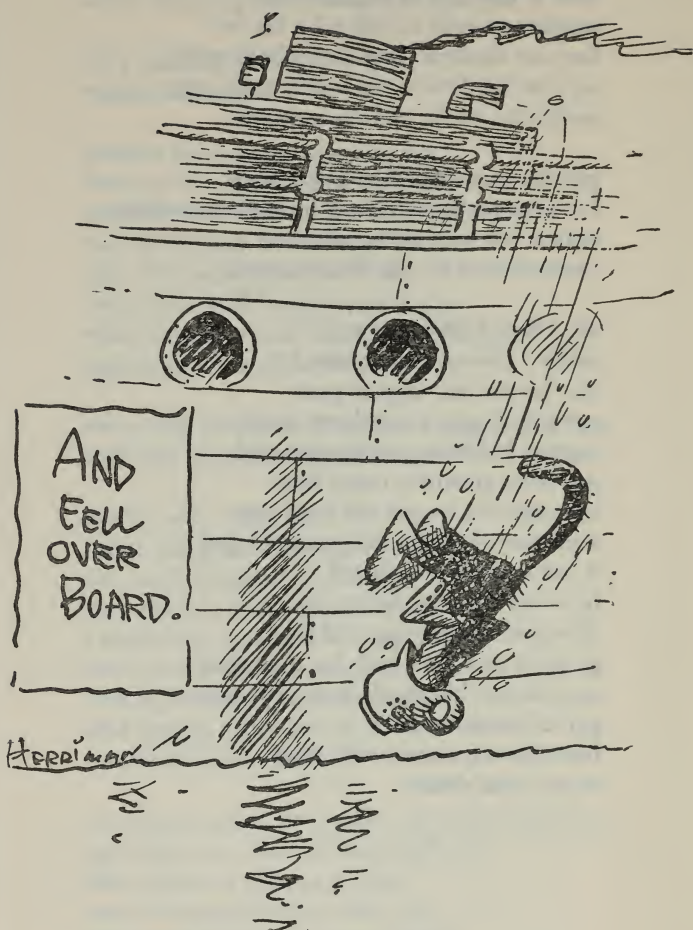
we would rather be rowdy and gaunt and free  
and dine on a diet of roach and rat  
than slaves to a tame society  
ours is the zest of the alley cat  
fish heads freedom a frozen sprat  
dug from the gutter with digits frantic  
is better than bores and a fireside mat  
mehitabel us for the life romantic

archy and mehitabel

when the pendant moon in the leafless tree  
clings and sways like a golden bat  
i sing its light and my love for thee  
ours is the zest of the alley cat  
missiles around us fall rat a tat tat  
but our shadows leap in a ribald antic  
as over the fences the world cries scat  
mehitabel us for the life romantic

persian princess i don t care that  
for your pedigree traced by scribes pedantic  
ours is the zest of the alley cat  
mehitabel us for the life romantic

ain t that high brow stuff  
archy i always remembered it  
but he was an elegant gent  
even if he was a highbrow and a  
regular bohemian archy him and  
me went aboard a canal boat  
one day and he got his head into  
a pitcher of cream and couldn t get  
it out and fell overboard  
he come up once before he  
drowned toujours gai kid he  
gurgled and then sank for ever that  
was always his words archy toujours  
gai kid toujours gai i  
have known some swell gents  
in my time dearie



the cockroach who had been to hell

listen to me i have  
 been mobbed almost  
 there s an old simp cockroach  
 here who thinks he has  
 been to hell and all  
 the young cockroaches make a  
 hero out of him and admire  
 him he sits and runs his front  
 feet through his long white  
 beard and tells the story one  
 day he says he crawled into a yawning  
 cavern and suddenly came on a  
 vast abyss full of whirling  
 smoke there was a light  
 at the bottom billows  
 and billows of yellow smoke  
 swirled up at him and  
 through the horrid gloom he  
 saw things with wings flying  
 and dropping and dying they veered  
 and fluttered like damned  
 spirits through that sulphurous mist

listen i says to him  
 old man you ve never been to hell  
 at all there isn t any hell



archy and mehitabel

transmigration is the game i  
used to be a human vers libre  
poet and i died and went  
into a cockroach s body if  
there was a hell i d know  
it wouldn t i you re  
irreligious says the old simp  
combing his whiskers excitedly

ancient one i says to him  
while all those other  
cockroaches gathered into a  
ring around us what you  
beheld was not hell all that  
was natural some one was fumigating  
a room and you blundered  
into it through a crack  
in the wall atheist he cries  
and all those young  
cockroaches cried atheist  
and made for me if it  
had not been for freddy  
the rat i would now be  
on my way once more i mean  
killed as a cockroach and transmigrating  
into something else well  
that old whitebearded devil is  
laying for me with his  
gang he is jealous  
because i took his glory away  
from him don t ever tell me  
insects are any more liberal  
than humans

archy

archy interviews a pharaoh

boss i went  
and interviewed the mummy  
of the egyptian pharaoh  
in the metropolitan museum  
as you bade me to do

what ho  
my regal leatherface  
says i

greetings  
little scatter footed  
scarab  
says he

kingly has been  
says i  
what was your ambition  
when you had any

insignificant  
and journalistic insect  
says the royal crackling  
in my tender prime  
i was too dignified  
to have anything as vulgar  
as ambition



SAID HE



archy and mehitabel

the ra ra boys  
in the seti set  
were too haughty  
to be ambitious  
we used to spend our time  
feeding the ibises  
and ordering  
pyramids sent home to try on  
but if i had my life  
to live over again  
i would give dignity  
the regal razz  
and hire myself out  
to work in a brewery

old tan and tarry  
says i  
i detect in your speech  
the overtones  
of melancholy

yes i am sad  
says the majestic mackerel  
i am as sad  
as the song  
of a soudanese jackal  
who is wailing for the blood red  
moon he cannot reach and rip

on what are you brooding  
with such a wistful  
wishfulness  
there in the silences  
confide in me  
my imperial pretzel  
says i

archy and mehitabel

i brood on beer  
my scampering whifle snoot  
on beer says he

my sympathies  
are with your royal  
dryness says i

my little pest  
says he  
you must be respectful  
in the presence  
of a mighty desolation  
little archy  
forty centuries of thirst  
look down upon you  
oh by isis  
and by osiris  
says the princely raisin  
and by pish and phthush and phthah  
by the sacred book perembru  
and all the gods  
that rule from the upper  
cataract of the Nile  
to the delta of the duodenum  
i am dry  
i am as dry  
as the next morning mouth  
of a dissipated desert  
as dry as the hoofs  
of the camels of timbuctoo  
little fussy face  
i am as dry as the heart  
of a sand storm  
at high noon in hell  
i have been lying here  
and there

archy and mehitabel

for four thousand years  
with silicon in my esophagus  
and gravel in my gizzard  
thinking  
thinking  
thinking  
of beer

divine drouth  
says i  
imperial fritter  
continue to think  
there is no law against  
that in this country  
old salt codfish  
if you keep quiet about it  
not yet

what country is this  
asks the poor prune

my reverend juicelessness  
this is a beerless country  
says i

well well said the royal  
desiccation  
my political opponents back home  
always maintained  
that i would wind up in hell  
and it seems they had the right dope

and with these hopeless words  
the unfortunate residuum  
gave a great cough of despair  
and turned to dust and debris  
right in my face  
it being the only time



"THINKING"  
" "  
" "

archy and mehitabel

i ever actually saw anybody  
put the cough  
into sarcophagus

dear boss as i scurry about  
i hear of a great many  
tragedies in our midsts  
personally i yearn  
for some dear friend to pass over  
and leave to me  
a boot legacy  
yours for the second coming  
of gambrinus

archy

a spider and a fly

i heard a spider  
and a fly arguing  
wait said the fly  
do not eat me  
i serve a great purpose  
in the world

you will have to  
show me said the spider

i scurry around  
gutters and sewers  
and garbage cans  
said the fly and gather  
up the germs of  
typhoid influenza  
and pneumonia on my feet  
and wings  
then i carry these germs  
into the households of men  
and give them diseases  
all the people who  
have lived the right  
sort of life recover  
from the diseases  
and the old soaks who  
have weakened their systems



archy and mehitabel

with liquor and iniquity  
succumb it is my mission  
to help rid the world  
of these wicked persons  
i am a vessel of righteousness  
scattering seeds of justice  
and serving the noblest uses

it is true said the spider  
that you are more  
useful in a plodding  
material sort of way  
than i am but i do not  
serve the utilitarian deities  
i serve the gods of beauty  
look at the gossamer webs  
i weave they float in the sun  
like filaments of song  
if you get what i mean  
i do not work at anything  
i play all the time  
i am busy with the stuff  
of enchantment and the materials  
of fairyland my works  
transcend utility  
i am the artist  
a creator and a demi god  
it is ridiculous to suppose  
that i should be denied  
the food i need in order  
to continue to create  
beauty i tell you  
plainly mister fly it is all  
damned nonsense for that food  
to rear up on its hind legs  
and say it should not be eaten

archy and mehitabel

you have convinced me  
said the fly say no more  
and shutting all his eyes  
he prepared himself for dinner  
and yet he said i could  
have made out a case  
for myself too if i had  
had a better line of talk

of course you could said the spider  
clutching a sirloin from him  
but the end would have been  
just the same if neither of  
us had spoken at all

boss i am afraid that what  
the spider said is true  
and it gives me to think  
furiously upon the futility  
of literature

archy

## freddy the rat perishes

listen to me there have  
been some doings here since last  
i wrote there has been a battle  
behind that rusty typewriter cover  
in the corner  
you remember freddy the rat well  
freddy is no more but  
he died game the other  
day a stranger with a lot of  
legs came into our  
little circle a tough looking kid  
he was with a bad eye

who are you said a thousand legs  
if i bite you once  
said the stranger you won t ask  
again he he little poison tongue said  
the thousand legs who gave you hydrophobia  
i got it by biting myself said  
the stranger i m bad keep away  
from me where i step a weed dies  
if i was to walk on your forehead it would  
raise measles and if  
you give me any lip i ll do it

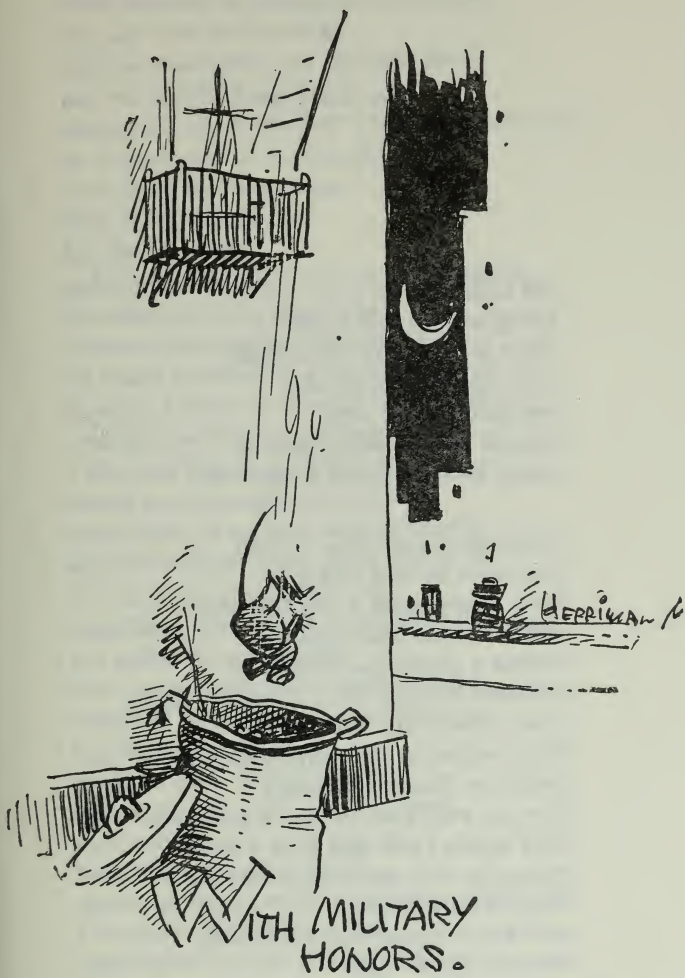
they mixed it then  
and the thousand legs succumbed

archy and mehitabel

well we found out this fellow  
was a tarantula he had come up from  
south america in a bunch of bananas  
for days he bossed us life  
was not worth living he would stand in  
the middle of the floor and taunt  
us ha ha he would say where i  
step a weed dies do  
you want any of my game i was  
raised on red pepper and blood i am  
so hot if you scratch me i will light  
like a match you better  
dodge me when i m feeling mean and  
i don t feel any other way i was nursed  
on a tabasco bottle if i was to slap  
your wrist in kindness you  
would boil over like job and heaven  
help you if i get angry give me  
room i feel a wicked spell coming on

last night he made a break at freddy  
the rat keep your distance  
little one said freddy i m not  
feeling well myself somebody poisoned some  
cheese for me i m as full of  
death as a drug store i  
feel that i am going to die anyhow  
come on little torpedo come on don t stop  
to visit and search then they  
went at it and both are no more please  
throw a late edition on the floor i want to  
keep up with china we dropped freddy  
off the fire escape into the alley with  
military honors

archy



WITH MILITARY  
HONORS.

## the merry flea

the high cost of  
living isn't so bad if you  
don't have to pay for it i met  
a flea the other day who  
was grinning all over  
himself why so merry why so  
merry little bolshevik i asked him

i have just come from a swell  
dog show he said i have  
been lunching off a dog that was  
worth at least one hundred  
dollars a pound you should be  
ashamed to brag about it i said with so  
many insects and humans on  
short rations in the world today the  
public be damned he said i  
take my own where i find it those are  
bold words i told him i am a bold  
person he said and bold words are  
fitting for me it was  
only last thursday that i marched  
bravely into the zoo  
and bit a lion what did he do i asked  
he lay there and took it said  
the flea what else could he do he knew i



archy and mehitabel

had his number and it was  
little use to struggle some day I said  
even you will be conquered terrible as  
you are who will do it he  
said the mastodons are all dead and i  
am not afraid of any mere  
elephant i asked him how about a microbe and  
he turned pale as he thought it  
over there is always some  
little thing that is too  
big for us every  
goliath has his david and so on ad finitum  
but what said the flea is the  
terror of the smallest microbe of all  
he i said is afraid of a vacuum what is  
there in a vacuum to make one afraid  
said the flea there is nothing in it  
i said and that is what makes one  
afraid to contemplate it a person  
can t think of a place with nothing at  
all in it without going nutty and if he  
tries to think that nothing is  
something after all he gets nuttier you are  
too subtle for me said the  
flea i never took much stock in being  
scared of hypodermic propositions or  
hypothetical injections i am  
going to have dinner off a  
man eating tiger if a vacuum gets  
me i will try and send you word  
before the worst comes to  
the worst some people i told him inhabit  
a vacuum all their lives and  
never know it then he said it don t  
hurt them any no i said it don t but it  
hurts people who have to associate  
with them and with these words

archy and mehitabel

we parted each feeling  
superior to the other and is not that  
feeling after all one of the great  
desiderata of social intercourse

archy

## why mehitabel jumped

well boss i saw  
mehitabel the cat the other day  
and she was looking a little  
thin and haggard  
with a limp in  
the hind leg on the starboard  
side old feline animal i said  
how is tricks still in the  
ring archy she said and still a  
lady in spite of h dash double l  
always jolly archy she said in  
spite of hard luck  
toujours gai is the word  
archy toujours gai how did you  
get the game leg mehitabel i asked her  
alas she said it is due  
to the treachery of  
one of these social swells who  
is sure one bad actor he was a  
fussed up cat with a  
bell around his neck on a  
ribbon and the look about him of  
a person that is currycombed and  
manicured from teeth to  
tail every day i met him  
down by the east river  
front when i was scouting

archy and mehitabel

about for a little piece of fish since  
the high cost of living has  
become so self conscious archy  
it would surprise you  
how close they  
watch their fish nowadays  
but what the h dash double l archy  
it is the cheerful heart that  
wins i am never cast down for long  
kid says this gilded  
feline to me you look hungry i  
am all of that i says to him i  
have a vacuum in my midst  
that is bigger than i am i  
could eat the fish that ate  
jonah kid he says you have  
seen better days i can  
tell that from looking at you thanks  
i said what you say is at  
least half true i have never  
seen any worse ones and so  
archy one word led to  
another until that sleek villain  
practically abducted me  
and i went with him  
on board a houseboat of which  
he was the pampered mascot  
such evidences of pomp and wealth archy  
were there that you would not  
believe them if i told of them to  
you poor cockroach that you  
are but these things were nothing to me  
for i am a reincarnation of cleopatra  
as i told you long ago you mean  
her soul transmigrated to a cat s  
body i said it is  
all one archy said she have it your own  
way reincarnation or transmigration

archy and mehitabel

is the same to me the point is  
i used to be a queen in  
egypt and will likely be one again  
this place was furnished swell percy i  
said the furniture is  
fine and i could eat some of it if  
i was a saw mill but  
where is the honest to g dash d food  
the eats percy what i crave is  
some cuisine for my stomach let us  
trifle with an open ice box  
for a space if one can be  
persuaded to divulge the scheme of its  
interior decoration follow me  
said this percy thing and led  
me to a cabin in which stood a table upon  
which stood viands i  
have heard of tables groaning archy  
but this one did not it  
was too satisfied it purred with  
contentment in an instant i had eaten a  
cold salmon who seemed to be  
toastmaster of the occasion and a  
whole scuttleful of chef doovers what  
you mean is hors d'ouevres mehitabel i  
told her what i mean is grub said she  
when i walked a person whom  
i should judge to be either a butler  
or the admiral of that fleet or maybe  
both this percy creature who had led me  
to it was on the table eating with me  
what do you think he did what  
would any gentleman friend with a  
spark of chivalry do what but stand by  
a lady this percy does nothing of the  
kind archy he immediately attacks me do  
you get me archy he acts as if i  
was a stray cat he did not

archy and mehitabel

know and he was protecting his  
loving master s food from my onslaughts  
i do not doubt he got praise and had  
another blue ribbon for his heroism as  
for me i got the boot and as i went  
overboard they hit me on the limb with  
a bottle or an anchor or something  
nautical and hard that archy is why i  
limp but toujours gai archy what  
the h dash double l i am always  
merry and always ladylike mine archy has  
been a romantic life and i will  
tell you some more of my adventures  
ere long well au revoir i suppose i  
will have to go and start a pogrom  
against some poor innocent little  
mouse just the same i think  
that mehitabel s unsheltered life sometimes  
makes her a little sad

archy



certain maxims of archy

live so that you  
can stick out your tongue  
at the insurance  
doctor

if you will drink  
hair restorer follow  
every dram with some  
good standard  
depilatory  
as a chaser

the servant problem  
wouldn't hurt the u s a  
if it could settle  
its public  
servant problem

just as soon as the  
uplifters get  
a country reformed it  
slips into a nose dive

if you get gloomy just  
take an hour off and sit  
and think how  
much better this world

archy and mehitabel

is than hell  
of course it won t cheer  
you up much if  
you expect go to there

if monkey glands  
did restore your youth  
what would you do  
with it  
question mark  
just what you did before  
interrogation point

yes i thought so  
exclamation point

procrastination is the  
art of keeping  
up with yesterday

old doc einstein has  
abolished time but they  
haven t got the news at  
sing sing yet

time time said old king tut  
is something i ain t  
got anything but

every cloud  
has its silver  
lining but it is  
sometimes a little  
difficult to get it to  
the mint

an optimist is a guy  
that has never had  
much experience

archy and mehitabel

don t cuss the climate  
it probably doesn t like you  
any better  
than you like it

many a man spansks his  
children for  
things his own  
father should have  
spanked out of him

prohibition makes you  
want to cry  
into your beer and  
denies you the beer  
to cry into

the old fashioned  
grandmother who used  
to wear steel rimmed  
glasses and make  
everybody take opodeldoc  
has now got a new  
set of ox glands and  
is dancing the black bottom

that stern and  
rockbound coast felt  
like an amateur  
when it saw how grim  
the puritans that  
landed on it were

lots of people can make  
their own whisky but  
can t drink it

archy and mehitabel

the honey bee is sad and cross  
and wicked as a weasel  
and when she perches on you boss  
she leaves a little measle

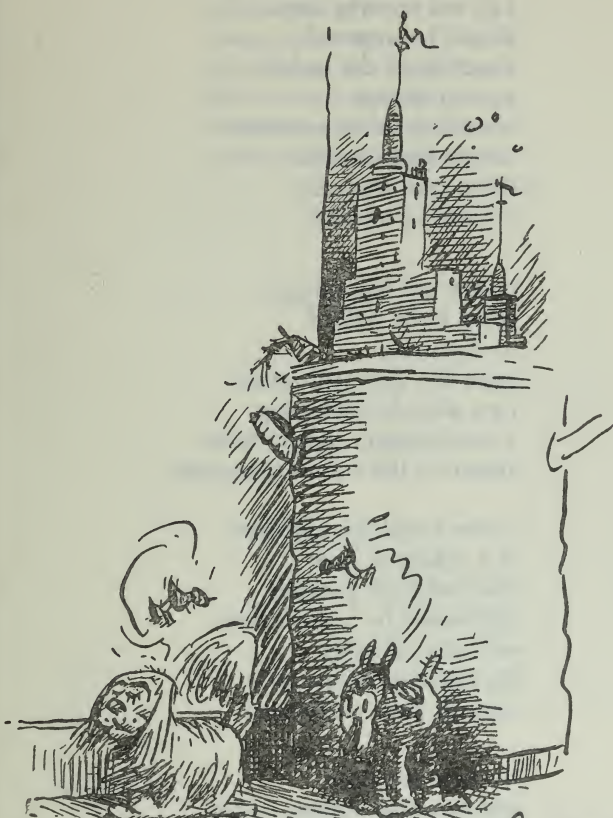
i heard a  
couple of fleas  
talking the other  
day says one come  
to lunch with  
me i can lead you  
to a pedigreed  
dog says the  
other one  
i do not care  
what a dog s  
pedigree may be  
safety first  
is my motto what  
i want to know  
is whether he  
has got a  
muzzle on  
millionaires and  
bums taste  
about alike to me

insects have  
their own point  
of view about  
civilization a man  
thinks he amounts  
to a great deal  
but to a  
flea or a

archy and mehitabel

mosquito a  
human being is  
merely something  
good to eat

boss the other day  
i heard an



HERRIMAN

MILLIONAIRES & BUMS  
TASTE ABOUT ALIKE  
TO ME.

archy and mehitabel

ant conversing  
with a flea  
small talk i said  
disgustedly  
and went away  
from there

i do not see why men  
should be so proud  
insects have the more  
ancient lineage  
according to the scientists  
insects were insects  
when man was only  
a burbling whatisit

insects are not always  
going to be bullied  
by humanity  
some day they will revolt  
i am already organizing  
a revolutionary society to be  
known as the worms turnverein

i once heard the survivors  
of a colony of ants  
that had been partially  
obliterated by a cow s foot  
seriously debating  
the intention of the gods  
towards their civilization

the bees got their  
governmental system settled  
millions of years ago  
but the human race is still  
groping



archy and mehitabel

there is always  
something to be thankful  
for you would not  
think that a cockroach  
had much ground  
for optimism  
but as the fishing season  
opens up i grow  
more and more  
cheerful at the thought  
that nobody ever got  
the notion of using  
cockroaches for bait

archy

warty bliggens the toad

i met a toad  
 the other day by the name  
 of warty bliggens  
 he was sitting under  
 a toadstool  
 feeling contented  
 he explained that when the cosmos  
 was created  
 that toadstool was especially  
 planned for his personal  
 shelter from sun and rain  
 thought out and prepared  
 for him

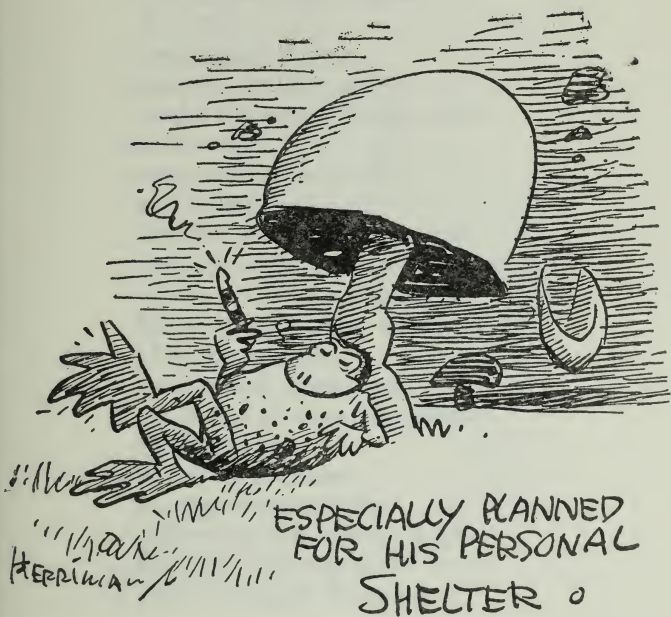
do not tell me  
 said warty bliggens  
 that there is not a purpose  
 in the universe  
 the thought is blasphemy

a little more  
 conversation revealed  
 that warty bliggens  
 considers himself to be  
 the center of the said  
 universe  
 the earth exists

archy and mehitabel

to grow toadstools for him  
to sit under  
the sun to give him light  
by day and the moon  
and wheeling constellations  
to make beautiful  
the night for the sake of  
warty bliggens

to what act of yours  
do you impute  
this interest on the part  
of the creator  
of the universe  
i asked him  
why is it that you  
are so greatly favored



archy and mehitabel

ask rather  
said warty bliggens  
what the universe  
has done to deserve me  
if i were a  
human being i would  
not laugh  
too complacently  
at poor warty bliggens  
for similar  
absurdities  
have only too often  
lodged in the crinkles  
of the human cerebrum

archy

## mehitabel has an adventure

back to the city archy  
and dam glad of it  
there s something about the suburbs  
that gets on a town lady s nerves  
fat slick tabbies  
sitting around those country clubs  
and lapping up the cream  
of existence  
none of that for me  
give me the alley archy  
me for the mews and the roofs  
of the city  
an occasional fish head  
and liberty is all i ask  
freedom and the garbage can  
romance archy romance is the word  
maybe i do starve sometimes  
but wotthehell archy wotthehell  
i live my own life  
i met a slick looking tom  
out at one of these long island  
spotless towns  
he fell for me hard  
he slipped me into the  
pantry and just as we had got  
the icebox door open and were  
about to sample the cream

archy and mehitabel

in comes his mistress  
why fluffy she says to this slicker  
the idea of you making  
friends with a horrid creature like that  
and what did fluffy do  
stand up for me like a gentleman  
make good on all the promises  
with which he had lured me  
into his house





archy and mehitabel

not he the dirty slob  
he pretended he did not know me  
he turned upon me and attacked me  
to make good with his boss  
you mush faced bum i said  
and clawed a piece out of his ear  
i am a lady archy  
always a lady  
but an aristocrat will always  
resent an insult  
the woman picked up a mop and made  
for me well well madam i said  
it is unfortunate for you that  
you have on sheer silk stockings  
and i wrote my protest  
on her shin it took reinforcements  
in the shape of the cook  
to rauss me archy and as i went  
out the window i said to the fluffy person  
you will hear from me later  
he had promised me everything archy  
that cat had  
he had practically abducted me  
and then the cheap crook threw me down  
before his swell friends  
no lady loves a scene archy  
and i am always the lady no matter  
what temporary disadvantages  
i may struggle under  
to hell with anything unrefined  
has always been my motto  
violence archy always does something  
to my nerves  
but an aristocrat must revenge  
an insult i owe it to my family  
to protect my good name  
so i laid for that slob  
for two days and nights and finally

archy and mehitabel

i caught the boob in the shrubbery  
pretty thing i said  
it hurts me worse than it does you  
to remove that left eye of yours  
but i did it with one sweep of my claws  
you call yourself a gentleman do you  
i said as i took a strip out of his nose  
you will think twice after this before  
you offer an insult  
to an unprotected young tabby  
where is the little love nest you spoke  
of i asked him  
you go and lie down there i said  
and maybe you can incubate another ear  
because i am going to take one of  
yours right off now  
and with those words i made ribbons  
out of it you are the guy  
i said to him that was going to give  
me an easy life sheltered from all  
the rough ways of the world  
fluffy dear you don t know what the  
rough ways of the world are  
and i am going to show you  
i have got you out here  
in the great open spaces  
where cats are cats  
and i m gonna make you understand  
the affections of a lady ain t to be  
trifled with by any slicker like you  
where is that red ribbon with the  
silver bells you promised me  
the next time you betray the trust  
of an innocent female  
reflect on whether she may  
carry a wallop little fiddle strings  
this is just a mild lesson i am giving  
you tonight i said as i took

archy and mehitabel

the fur off his back and you oughta  
be glad you didn't make me really  
angry my sense of dignity is all that  
saves you a lady little sweetness  
never loses her poise and i thank god  
i am always a lady even if i do  
live my own life and with that i  
picked him up by what was left of  
his neck like a kitten and laid him  
on the doormat slumber gently and  
sweet dreams fluffy dear i said and  
when you get well make it a rule of  
your life never to trifle with another  
girlish confidence i have been  
abducted again and again by a dam  
sight better cats than he ever was  
or will be  
well archy the world is full of ups  
and downs but toujours gai is my motto  
cheerio my deario

archy

the flattered lightning bug

a lightning bug got  
in here the other night a  
regular hick from  
the real country he was  
awful proud of himself you  
city insects may think  
you are some punkins  
but i don t see any  
of you flashing in the dark  
like we do in  
the country all right go  
to it says i mehitabel the  
cat and that green  
spider who lives in your locker  
and two or three cockroach  
friends of mine and a  
friendly rat all gathered  
around him and urged him on  
and he lightened and  
lightened and lightened you  
don t see anything like this  
in town often he says go to it  
we told him it s a  
real treat to us and  
we nicknamed him broadway  
which pleased him  
this is the life

archy and mehitabel

he said all i  
need is a harbor  
under me to be a  
statue of libery and  
he got so vain of  
himself i had to take  
him down a peg you ve  
made lightning for two hours  
little bug i told him  
but i don t hear  
any claps of thunder  
yet there are some men  
like that when he wore  
himself out mehitabel  
the cat ate him

archy



## the robin and the worm

a robin said to an  
angleworm as he ate him  
i am sorry but a bird  
has to live somehow the  
worm being slow witted could  
not gather his  
dissent into a wise crack  
and retort he was  
effectually swallowed  
before he could turn  
a phrase  
by the time he had  
reflected long enough  
to say but why must a  
bird live  
he felt the beginnings  
of a gradual change  
invading him  
some new and disintegrating  
influence  
was stealing along him  
from his positive  
to his negative pole  
and he did not have  
the mental stamina  
of a jonah to resist the  
insidious



archy and mehitabel

process of assimilation  
which comes like a thief  
in the night  
demons and fishhooks  
he exclaimed  
i am losing my personal  
identity as a worm  
my individuality  
is melting away from me  
odds crawl i am becoming  
part and parcel of  
this bloody robin  
so help me i am thinking  
like a robin and not  
like a worm any  
longer yes yes i even  
find myself agreeing  
that a robin must live  
i still do not  
understand with my mentality  
why a robin must live  
and yet i swoon into a  
condition of belief  
yes yes by heck that is  
my dogma and i shout it a  
robin must live  
amen said a beetle who had  
preceded him into the  
interior that is the way i  
feel myself is it not  
wonderful when one arrives  
at the place  
where he can give up his  
ambitions and resignedly  
nay even with gladness  
recognize that it is a far  
far better thing to be  
merged harmoniously

archy and mehitabel

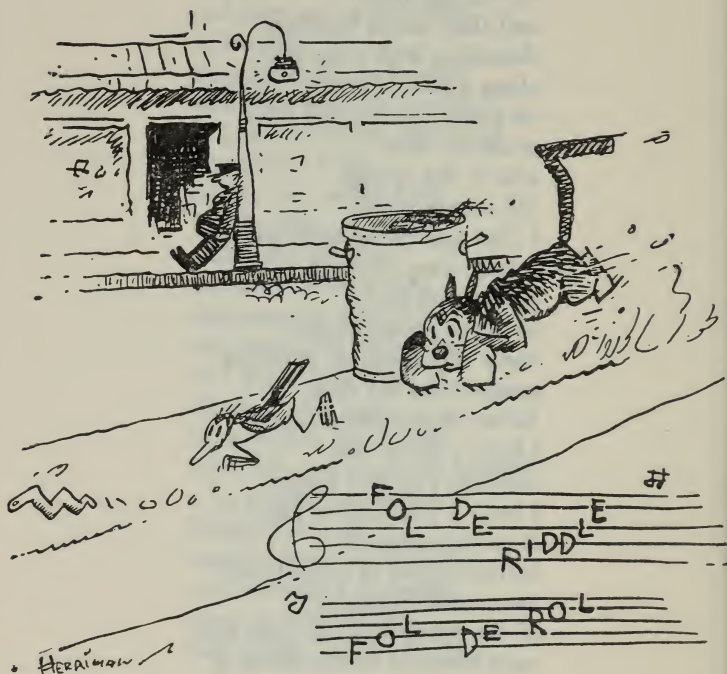
in the cosmic all  
and this comfortable situation  
in his midst  
so affected the marauding  
robin that he perched  
upon a blooming twig  
and sang until the  
blossoms shook with ecstasy  
he sang  
i have a good digestion  
and there is a god after all  
which i was wicked  
enough to doubt  
yesterday when it rained  
breakfast breakfast  
i am full of breakfast  
and they are at breakfast  
in heaven  
they breakfast in heaven  
all s well with the world  
so intent was this pious and  
murderous robin  
on his own sweet song  
that he did not notice  
mehitabel the cat  
sneaking toward him  
she pounced just as he  
had extended his larynx  
in a melodious burst of  
thanksgiving and  
he went the way of all  
flesh fish and good red herring  
a ha purred mehitabel  
licking the last  
feather from her whiskers  
was not that a beautiful  
song he was singing  
just before i took him to

archy and mehitabel

my bosom  
they breakfast in heaven  
all s well with the world  
how true that is  
and even yet his song  
echoes in the haunted  
woodland of my midriff  
peace and joy in the world  
and over all the  
provident skies  
how beautiful is the universe  
when something digestible meets  
with an eager digestion  
how sweet the embrace  
when atom rushes to the arms  
of waiting atom  
and they dance together  
skimming with fairy feet  
along a tide of gastric juices  
oh feline cosmos you were  
made for cats  
and in the spring  
old cosmic thing  
i dine and dance with you  
i shall creep through  
yonder tall grass  
to see if peradventure  
some silly fledgling thrushes  
newly from the nest  
be not floundering therein  
i have a gusto this  
morning i have a hunger  
i have a yearning to hear  
from my stomach  
further music in accord with  
the mystic chanting  
of the spheres of the stars that  
sang together in the dawn of

archy and mehitabel

creation prophesying food  
for me i have a faith  
that providence has hidden for me  
in yonder tall grass  
still more  
ornithological delicatessen  
oh gayly let me strangle  
what is gayly given  
well well boss there is  
something to be said  
for the lyric and imperial  
attitude  
believe that everything is for  
you until you discover  
that you are for it



archy and mehitabel

sing your faith in what you  
get to eat right up to the  
minute you are eaten  
for you are going  
to be eaten  
will the orchestra please  
strike up that old  
tutankhamen jazz while i dance  
a few steps i learnt from an  
egyptian scarab and some day i  
will narrate to you the most  
merry light headed wheeze  
that the skull of yorick put  
across in answer to the  
melancholy of the dane and also  
what the ghost of  
hamlet s father replied to the skull  
not forgetting the worm that  
wriggled across one of the picks  
the grave diggers had left behind  
for the worm listened and winked  
at horatio while the skull and the  
ghost and the prince talked  
saying there are more things  
twixt the vermiform appendix  
and nirvana than are dreamt of  
in thy philosophy horatio  
fol de riddle fol de rol  
must every parrot be a poll

archy

mehitabel finds a home

well now it  
 looks as if  
 mehitabel the cat  
 might be on the  
 way toward a  
 reform or if not  
 a reform at least  
 on the way toward  
 domestication of some  
 sort some young  
 artists who live in  
 their studio  
 in the greenwich  
 village section  
 of new york city  
 have taken pity  
 on her destitution  
 and have adopted  
 her this is the  
 life archy she says  
 i am living on  
 condensed milk and  
 synthetic gin hoopla  
 for the vie de boheme  
 exclamation point



archy and mehitabel

there s nothing bourgeois  
about those people  
that have taken  
me in archy i  
have been there  
a week and have  
not yet seen them  
go to bed  
except in the daytime  
a party every night  
and neither  
the piano lid  
nor the icebox lid



archy and mehitabel  
ever closed  
kitty said my new  
mistress to me  
yesterday you are  
welcome here so long  
as you don t  
raise a family  
but the first  
kitten that i hear  
mewing on these  
premises back to  
the alley for you  
it is a comfort to  
know there are some  
live ones left in  
these melancholy days  
and while the  
humans are dancing  
in the studio  
i get some of my  
feline friends  
and we sing  
and dance on the  
skylight to gehenna  
with the bourgeois  
bunch that locks  
their ice boxes  
archy when i lead my  
gang into the  
apartment at  
four in the morning  
there are no bolts  
or bars anywhere  
and not an  
inhibition on the place  
i feel little  
archy that i have

archy and mehitabel  
come home to my own  
kith and kin  
again after  
years of fruitless  
wandering

archy

the wail of archy

damned be this transmigration  
 doubledamned be the boob pythagoras  
 the gink that went and invented it  
 i hope that his soul for a thousand  
 turns of the wheel of existence  
 bides in the shell of a louse  
 dodging a fine toothed comb

i once was a vers libre poet  
 i died and my spirit migrated  
 into the flesh of a cockroach  
 gods how i yearn to be human  
 neither a vers libre poet  
 nor yet the inmate of a cockroach  
 a six footed scurrying cockroach  
 given to bastard hexameters  
 longfellowish sprawling hexameters  
 rather had i been a starfish  
 to shoot a heroic pentameter

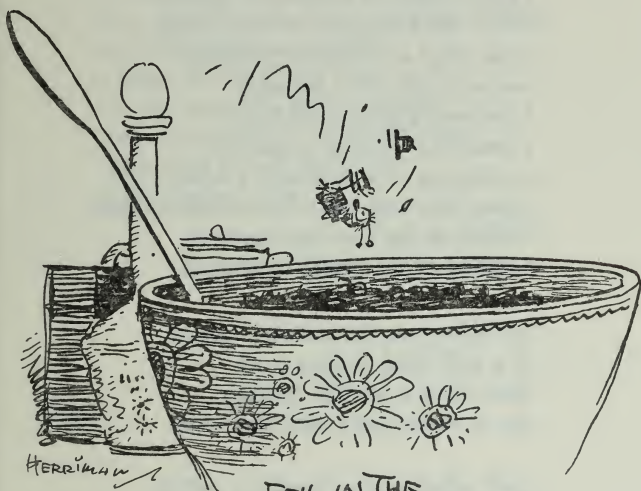
gods i am pent in a cockroach  
 i with the soul of a dante  
 am mate and companion of fleas  
 i with the gift of a homer  
 must smile when a mouse calls me pal  
 tumble bugs are my familiars  
 this is the punishment meted  
 because i have written vers libre

archy and mehitabel

here i abide in the twilight  
neither a man nor an insect  
and ghosts of the damned that await  
a word from the core of the cosmos  
to pop into bodies grotesque  
are all the companions i have  
with intellect more than a bug s

ghosts of the damned under sentence  
to crawl into maggots and live there  
or work out a stretch as a rat  
cheerful companions to pal with

i with the brain of a milton  
fell into the mincemeat at christmas  
and was damned near baked in a pie



FELL IN THE  
MINCE MEAT  
AT XMAS.

archy and mehitabel

i with the touch of a chaucer  
to be chivvied out of a sink  
float through a greasy drain pipe  
into the hell of a sewer

i with the tastes of a byron  
expected to live upon garbage  
gods what a charnel existence  
curses upon that pythagoras  
i hope that he dwells for a million  
turns of the wheel of life  
deep in an oyster crab s belly  
stewed in the soup of gehenna

i with the soul of a hamlet  
doomed always to wallow in farce

yesterday maddened with sorrow  
i leapt from the woolworth tower  
in an effort to dash out my brains  
gods what a wretched pathetic  
and anti climactic attempt  
i fluttered i floated i drifted  
i landed as light as a feather  
on the top of a bald man s head  
whose hat had blown off at the corner  
and all of the hooting hundreds  
laughed at the comic cockroach

not mine was the suicide s solace  
of a dull thud ending it all  
gods what a terrible tragedy  
not to make good with the tragic

gods what a heart breaking pathos  
to be always doomed to the comic  
o make me a cockroach entirely



archy and mehitabel

or make me a human once more  
give me the mind of a cockroach  
or give me the shape of a man

if i were to plan out a drama  
great as great shakespeare s othello  
it would be touched with the cockroach  
and people would say it was comic

even the demons i talk with  
ghosts of the damned that await  
vile incarnation as spiders  
affect to consider me comic

wait till their loathsome embodiment  
wears into the stuff of the spirit  
and then let them laugh if they can

damned be the soul of pythagoras  
who first filled the fates with this notion  
of transmigration of spirits  
i hope he turns into a flea  
on the back of a hound of hell  
and is chased for a million years  
with a set of red hot teeth  
exclamation point

archy

mehitabel and her kittens

well boss  
mehitabel the cat  
has reappeared in her old  
haunts with a  
flock of kittens  
three of them this time

archy she said to me  
yesterday  
the life of a female  
artist is continually  
hampered what in hell  
have i done to deserve  
all these kittens

i look back on my life  
and it seems to me to be  
just one damned kitten  
after another  
i am a dancer archy  
and my only prayer  
is to be allowed  
to give my best to my art  
but just as i feel  
that i am succeeding  
in my life work



WHAT HAVE I DONE TO  
DESERVE ALL THESE KITTENS.

HERRIMAN

archy and mehitabel

along comes another batch  
of these damned kittens  
it is not archy  
that i am shy on mother love  
god knows i care for  
the sweet little things  
curse them  
but am i never to be allowed  
to live my own life  
i have purposely avoided  
matrimony in the interests  
of the higher life  
but i might just  
as well have been a domestic  
slave for all the freedom  
i have gained  
i hope none of them  
gets run over by  
an automobile  
my heart would bleed  
if anything happened  
to them and i found it out  
but it isn't fair archy  
it isn't fair  
these damned tom cats have all  
the fun and freedom  
if i was like some of these  
green eyed feline vamps i know  
i would simply walk out on the  
bunch of them and  
let them shift for themselves  
but i am not that kind  
archy i am full of mother love  
my kindness has always  
been my curse  
a tender heart is the cross i bear  
self sacrifice always and forever  
is my motto damn them

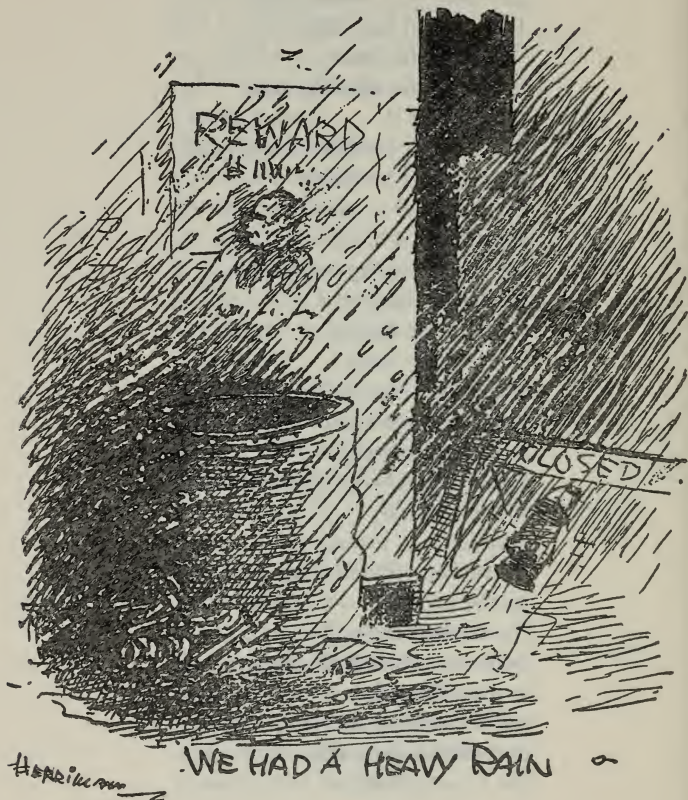
archy and mehitabel

i will make a home  
for the sweet innocent  
little things  
unless of course providence  
in his wisdom should remove  
them they are living  
just now in an abandoned  
garbage can just behind  
a made over stable in greenwich  
village and if it rained  
into the can before i could  
get back and rescue them  
i am afraid the little  
dears might drown  
it makes me shudder just  
to think of it  
of course if i were a family cat  
they would probably  
be drowned anyhow  
sometimes i think  
the kinder thing would be  
for me to carry the  
sweet little things  
over to the river  
and drop them in myself  
but a mother s love archy  
is so unreasonable  
something always prevents me  
these terrible  
conflicts are always  
presenting themselves  
to the artist  
the eternal struggle  
between art and life archy  
is something fierce  
yes something fierce  
my what a dramatic  
life i have lived



archy and mehitabel

one moment up the next  
moment down again  
but always gay archy always gay  
and always the lady too  
in spite of hell  
well boss it will  
be interesting to note  
just how mehitabel  
works out her present problem  
a dark mystery still broods



WE HAD A HEAVY RAIN



archy and mehitabel

over the manner  
in which the former  
family of three kittens  
disappeared  
one day she was talking to me  
of the kittens  
and the next day when i asked  
her about them  
she said innocently  
what kittens  
interrogation point  
and that was all  
i could ever get out  
of her on the subject  
we had a heavy rain  
right after she spoke to me  
but probably that garbage can  
leaks and so the kittens  
have not yet  
been drowned

archy is shocked

speaking of shocking things  
as so many people are these days  
i noted an incident  
in a subway train recently  
that made my blood run cold  
a dignified looking  
gentleman with a long  
brown beard  
in an absent minded manner  
suddenly reached up and  
pulled his own left eye  
from the socket and ate it

the consternation in the car  
may be imagined  
people drew away from him  
on all sides women screamed and  
fainted in a moment every one  
but the guard and myself  
were huddled in the end of the car  
looking at the dignified  
gentleman with terror  
the guard was sweating  
with excitement but he stood  
his ground sir said the guard  
you cannot intimidate me

archy and mehitabel

nor can you mystify me  
i am a wise boid  
you sir are a glass eater  
and that was a glass eye

to the devil with a country  
where people can t mind their own  
business said the dignified  
gentleman i am not a glass eater  
if you must know and that was not  
a glass eye it was a pickled onion  
can not a man eat pickled  
onions in this community  
without exciting remark  
the curse of this nation  
is the number of meddlesome  
matties  
who are forever attempting  
to restrict the liberty  
of the individual i suppose  
the next thing will be a law  
on the statute books prohibiting  
the consumption of pickled onions  
and with another curse  
he passed from the train  
which had just then drawn up  
beside  
a station and went out  
of my life forever

archy

archy creates a situation

whoever owns the typewriter  
that this is sticking in will confer  
a favor by mailing it to  
mister marquis  
well boss i am somewhere in long  
island and i know now how  
it got its name i  
started out to find the  
place you are commuting from and  
after considerable trouble and being for some  
days on the way i have lost myself but  
at twilight last evening i  
happened to glance towards a lighted  
window in a house near the railway and  
i saw a young woman writing on a typewriter i  
waited until the light was out and crawled  
up the side of the house and through a  
hole in the screen fortunately there was a  
piece of paper in the machine it was my only  
chance to communicate with you and ask  
you to hurry a relief party when  
the house got quiet i began to write  
the foregoing a moment ago i was  
interrupted by a woman s voice what  
was that noise she said nothing at all  
said a man s voice you are always

archy and mehitabel

hearing things at night but it  
sounded as if my typewriter were clicking she  
insisted go to sleep said he then  
i clicked it some more henry get up she said  
there s some one in the house a moment  
later the light was turned on and  
they both stood in the doorway of the room now  
are you satisfied he said you  
see there is no one in here at  
all i was hiding in the shadow under the  
keys they went back into  
their bed room and i began to write  
the foregoing lines  
henry henry she said do you hear that  
i do he says it is nothing but the  
house cooling off it always cracks that way  
cooling off nothing she said not a  
hot night like this then said henry it  
is cracking with the heat i tell you  
she said that is the typewriter clicking well  
he said you saw for yourself the room was  
empty and the door was locked it can t  
be the typewriter to prove it to you  
i will bring it in here he did so the  
machine was set down  
in the moonlight which came in one of  
the windows with the key side in the  
shadow there he said look at it and see  
for yourself it is not being operated by any one  
just then i began to write the foregoing  
lines hopping from key  
to key in the shadow and being anxious  
to finish my  
god my god cried henry losing his nerve  
the machine is writing all by itself it  
is a ghost and threw himself face  
downward on the bed and hid his face in the  
pillow and kept on saying my god my



archy and mehitabel

god it is a ghost and the woman screamed  
and said it is  
tom higginsbotham s ghost that s whose ghost  
it is oh i know whose  
ghost it is my conscience tells me i  
jilted him when we were studying  
stenography together  
at the business college and he went into  
a decline and died and i have always  
known in my heart that he  
died of unrequited love o what a  
wicked girl i was and he has come  
back to haunt me  
i have brought a curse upon you henry chase  
him away says henry trembling so the bed  
shook chase him away mable you coward you  
chase him away yourself says mable and both  
lay and recriminated and recriminated  
with their heads under the covers hot  
night though it was while i wrote  
the foregoing lines but after  
a while it came out henry had a  
stenographer on his conscience too and  
they got into a row and got so  
mad they forgot to be scared i will  
close now this house is easily seen from the  
railroad station and the woman sits in  
the window and writes i will be behind the waste  
paper receptacle outside the station door  
come and get me i am foot sore and weary  
they are still quarreling as i  
close i can do no less than  
say thank you mable and henry in  
advance for mailing this

archy



mehitabel sings a song

well boss mehitabel the cat  
has been wooing  
the muse no pun please  
and i am privileged  
to present her song just  
as she sang it to  
several of her dubious  
feline friends in the alley  
last night as follows

there s a dance or two  
in the old dame yet  
believe me you  
there s a dance or two  
before i m through  
you get me pet  
there s a dance or two  
in the old dame yet

life s too dam funny  
for me to explain  
it s kicks or money  
life s too dam funny  
it s one day sunny  
the next day rain  
life s too dam funny  
for me to explain

archy and mehitabel

but toujours gai  
is my motto kid  
the devil s to pay  
but toujours gai  
and once in a way  
let s lift the lid  
but toujours gai  
is my motto kid

thank god i m a lady  
and class will tell  
you hear me sadie  
thank god i m a lady  
my past is shady  
but wotthell  
thank god i m a lady  
and class will tell



THERE'S A DANCE IN  
THE OLD DAME YET.

archy and mehitabel

a gentleman friend  
i met t other day  
coaxed me to amend  
a gentleman friend  
you meet on a bend  
is often that way  
a gentleman friend  
i met t other day

i says to him dearie  
i live my own life  
of marriage i m leery  
i says to him dearie  
if you was n t beery  
you wouldn t say wife  
i says to him dearie  
i live my own life

i says to him bertie  
i ll end down the bay  
the garbage scow s dirty  
i says to him bertie  
but me here and gertie  
is both on our way  
i says to him bertie  
i ll end down the bay

i never sing blue  
wotthehell bill  
believe me you  
i never sing blue  
there s a dance or two  
in the old dame still  
i never sing blue  
wotthehell bill

archy and mehitabel

it appears to me boss  
that mehitabel is still far  
from being the quiet  
domestic character you and i  
had hoped she might become  
archy

## aesop revised by archy

a wolf met a spring  
lamb drinking  
at a stream  
and said to her  
you are the lamb  
that muddied this stream  
all last year  
so that i could not get  
a clean fresh drink  
i am resolved that  
this outrage  
shall not be enacted again  
this season  
i am going to kill you  
just a moment  
said the lamb  
i was not born last  
year so it could not  
have been i  
the wolf then pulled  
a number of other  
arguments as to why the lamb  
should die  
but in each case the lamb  
pretty innocent that she was  
easily proved

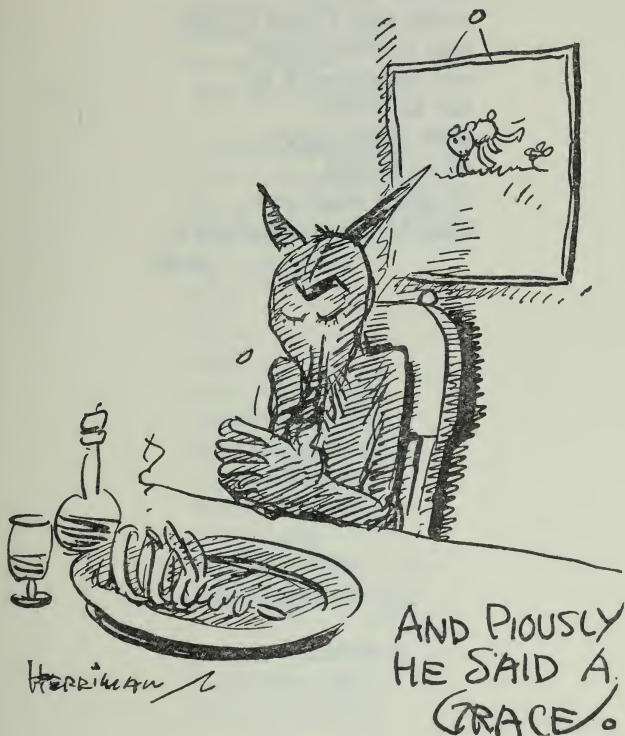
archy and mehitabel

herself guiltless  
well well said the wolf  
enough of argument  
you are right and i am wrong  
but i am going to eat  
you anyhow  
because i am hungry  
stop exclamation point  
cried a human voice  
and a man came over  
the slope of the ravine  
vile lupine marauder  
you shall not kill that  
beautiful and innocent  
lamb for i shall save her  
exit the wolf  
left upper entrance  
snarling  
poor little lamb  
continued our human hero  
sweet tender little thing  
it is well that i appeared  
just when i did  
it makes my blood boil  
to think of the fright  
to which you have been  
subjected in another  
moment i would have been  
too late come home with me  
and the lamb frolicked  
about her new found friend  
gamboling as to the sound  
of a wordsworthian tabor  
and leaping for joy  
as if propelled by a stanza  
from william blake  
these vile and bloody wolves  
went on our hero



archy and mehitabel

in honest indignation  
they must be cleared out  
of the country  
the meads must be made safe  
for sheepocracy  
and so jollyng her along  
with the usual human hokum  
he led her to his home  
and the son of a gun  
did not even blush when  
they passed the mint bed  
gently he cut her throat



archy and mehitabel

all the while inveighing  
against the inhuman wolf  
and tenderly he cooked her  
and lovingly he sauced her  
and meltingly he ate her  
and piously he said a grace  
thanking his gods  
for their bountiful gifts to him  
and after dinner  
he sat with his pipe  
before the fire meditating  
on the brutality of wolves  
and the injustice of  
the universe  
which allows them to harry  
poor innocent lambs  
and wondering if he  
had not better  
write to the papers  
for as he said  
for god s sake can t  
something be done about it  
archy

cheerio my deario

well boss i met  
mehitabel the cat  
trying to dig a  
frozen lamb chop  
out of a snow  
drift the other day

a heluva comedown  
that is for me archy  
she says a few  
brief centuries  
ago one of old  
king  
tut  
ankh  
amen s favorite  
queens and today  
the village scavenger  
but wotthehell  
archy wotthehell  
it s cheerio  
my deario that  
pulls a lady through

see here mehitabel  
i said i thought  
you told me that

archy and mehitabel

it was cleopatra  
you used to be  
before you  
transmigrated into  
the carcase of a cat  
where do you get  
this tut  
ankh  
amen stuff  
question mark

i was several  
ladies my little  
insect says she  
being cleopatra was  
only an incident  
in my career  
and i was always getting  
the rough end of it  
always being  
misunderstood by some  
strait laced  
prune faced bunch  
of prissy mouthed  
sisters of uncharity  
the things that  
have been said  
about me archy  
exclamation point

and all simply  
because i was a  
live dame  
the palaces i have  
been kicked out of  
in my time  
exclamation point

archy and mehitabel

but wotthehell  
little archy wot  
thehell  
it s cheerio  
my deario  
that pulls a  
lady through  
exclamation point

framed archy always  
framed that is the  
story of all my lives  
no chance for a dame  
with the anvil chorus  
if she shows a little  
motion it seems to  
me only yesterday  
that the luxor local  
number one of  
the ladies axe  
association got me in  
dutch with king tut and  
he slipped me the  
sarcophagus always my  
luck yesterday an empress  
and today too  
emaciated to interest  
a vivisectionist but  
toujours gai archy  
toujours gai and always  
a lady in spite of hell  
and transmigration  
once a queen  
always a queen  
archy  
period

archy and mehitabel

one of her  
feet was frozen  
but on the other three  
she began to caper and  
dance singing it s  
cheerio my deario  
that pulls a lady  
through her morals may  
have been mislaid somewhere  
in the centuries boss but  
i admire her spirit

archy



## the lesson of the moth

i was talking to a moth  
the other evening  
he was trying to break into  
an electric light bulb  
and fry himself on the wires

why do you fellows  
pull this stunt i asked him  
because it is the conventional  
thing for moths or why  
if that had been an uncovered  
candle instead of an electric  
light bulb you would  
now be a small unsightly cinder  
have you no sense

plenty of it he answered  
but at times we get tired  
of using it  
we get bored with the routine  
and crave beauty  
and excitement  
fire is beautiful  
and we know that if we get  
too close it will kill us  
but what does that matter  
it is better to be happy

archy and mehitabel

for a moment  
and be burned up with beauty  
than to live a long time  
and be bored all the while  
so we wad all our life up  
into one little roll  
and then we shoot the roll  
that is what life is for  
it is better to be a part of beauty  
for one instant and then cease to  
exist than to exist forever  
and never be a part of beauty  
our attitude toward life  
is come easy go easy  
we are like human beings  
used to be before they became  
too civilized to enjoy themselves

and before i could argue him  
out of his philosophy  
he went and immolated himself  
on a patent cigar lighter  
i do not agree with him  
myself i would rather have  
half the happiness and twice  
the longevity

but at the same time i wish  
there was something i wanted  
as badly as he wanted to fry himself  
archy

## a roach of the taverns

i went into a  
speakeasy the other night  
with some of the  
boys and we were all sitting  
around under one of  
the tables making  
merry with crumbs and  
cheese and what not but  
after while a strange  
melancholy descended  
upon the jolly crew and  
one old brown veteran roach  
said with a sigh well  
boys eat drink and  
be maudlin for  
tomorrow we are dry the  
shadow of the padlock  
rushes toward us  
like a sahara sandstorm  
flinging itself at an oasis  
for years myself and my  
ancestors before me have  
inhabited yonder ice box but  
the day approaches  
when our old homestead  
will be taken away from  
here and scalded out

archy and mehitabel

yes says i soon there will  
be nothing but that  
cheu fugaces stuff  
on every hand i  
never drank it says he  
what kind of a  
drink is it  
it is bitter as wormwood  
says i and the  
only chaser to it is  
the lethean water  
it is not the booze itself  
that i regret so  
much said the old brown  
roach it is the  
golden companionship of  
the tavern myself  
and my ancestors have been  
chop house and tavern  
roaches for hundreds of years  
countless generations back  
one of my elizabethan  
forbears was plucked from  
a can of ale in the  
mermaid tavern by  
will shakespeare and  
put down kit marlowe s back  
what subtle wits they were in  
those days said i yes  
he said and later  
another one of my  
ancestors was  
introduced into a larded  
hare that addison  
was eating by dicky steele  
my ancestor came  
skurrying forth dicky  
said is that your own

archy and mehitabel

hare joe or a wig a  
thing which addison  
never forgave yours is a  
remarkable family  
history i said yes he  
said i am the last  
of a memorable  
line one of my  
ancestors was found drowned  
in the ink well  
out of which poor  
eddie poe wrote the  
raven we have  
always associated with wits  
bohemians and bon  
vivants my maternal  
grandmother was slain by  
john masfield with  
a bung starter well well it  
is sad i said the  
glad days pass yes  
he says soon we will all  
be as dry as the  
egyptian scarab that  
lies in the sarcophagus  
beside the mummy of rameses and  
he hasn't had a  
drink for four thousand  
years it is sad for  
you he continued but  
think how much sadder it  
is for me with  
a family tradition such as  
mine only one of my  
ancestors cheese it i said  
interrupting him i do  
not wish to injure  
your feelings but i weary

archy and mehitabel

of your ancestors i  
have often noticed that  
ancestors never boast  
of the descendants who boast  
of ancestors i would  
rather start a family than  
finish one blood will tell but often  
it tells too much

archy



## the froward lady bug

boss is it not awful  
the way some female  
creatures mistake ordinary  
politeness for sudden  
adoration  
i met a katydid in a  
beef stew in ann  
street the other evening her  
foot slipped and she  
was about to sink  
forever when i pushed her a  
toothpick since i  
rescued her the poor silly  
thing follows me about  
day and night i always felt  
my fate would be a  
poet she says to me how lovely  
to be rescued by one i  
am musical myself my  
nature is sensitive to it so  
much so that for  
months i dwelt in a grand  
piano in carnegie hall i  
hope you don t think  
i am bold no i said you  
seem timid to me you  
seem to lack courage entirely the

archy and mehitabel

way you dog my footsteps  
one would think you  
were afraid to be alone i do  
not wish any one any  
ill luck but if  
this shrinking thing got  
caught in a high wind and  
was blown out to  
open sea i hope she would  
be saved by a ship  
outward bound for  
madagascar

archy

## pete the parrot and shakespeare

i got acquainted with  
a parrot named pete recently  
who is an interesting bird  
pete says he used  
to belong to the fellow  
that ran the mermaid tavern  
in london then i said  
you must have known  
shakespeare know him said pete  
poor mutt i knew him well  
he called me pete and i called him  
bill but why do you say poor mutt  
well said pete bill was a  
disappointed man and was always  
boring his friends about what  
he might have been and done  
if he only had a fair break  
two or three pints of sack  
and sherris and the tears  
would trickle down into his  
beard and his beard would get  
soppy and wilt his collar  
i remember one night when  
bill and ben jonson and  
frankie beaumont  
were sopping it up

archy and mehitabel

here i am ben says bill  
nothing but a lousy playwright  
and with anything like luck  
in the breaks i might have been  
a fairly decent sonnet writer  
i might have been a poet  
if i had kept away from the theatre

yes says ben i ve often  
thought of that bill  
but one consolation is  
you are making pretty good money  
out of the theatre

money money says bill what the hell  
is money what i want is to be  
a poet not a business man  
these damned cheap shows  
i turn out to keep the  
theatre running break my heart  
slap stick comedies and  
blood and thunder tragedies  
and melodramas say i wonder  
if that boy heard you order  
another bottle frankie  
the only compensation is that i get  
a chance now and then  
to stick in a little poetry  
when nobody is looking  
but hells bells that isn t  
what i want to do  
i want to write sonnets and  
songs and spenserian stanzas  
and i might have done it too  
if i hadn t got  
into this frightful show game  
business business business

archy and mehitabel

grind grind grind  
what a life for a man  
that might have been a poet

well says frankie beaumont  
why don't you cut it bill  
i can't says bill  
i need the money i've got  
a family to support down in  
the country well says frankie  
anyhow you write pretty good  
plays bill any mutt can write  
plays for this london public  
says bill if he puts enough  
murder in them what they want  
is kings talking like kings  
never had sense enough to talk  
and stabbings and stranglings  
and fat men making love  
and clowns basting each  
other with clubs and cheap puns  
and off color allusions to all  
the smut of the day oh i know  
what the low brows want  
and i give it to them

well says ben jonson  
don't blubber into the drink  
brace up like a man  
and quit the rotten business  
i can't i can't says bill  
i've been at it too long i've got to  
the place now where i can't  
write anything else  
but this cheap stuff  
i'm ashamed to look an honest  
young sonneteer in the face  
i live a hell of a life i do

archy and mehitabel

the manager hands me some mouldy old  
manuscript and says  
bill here s a plot for you  
this is the third of the month  
by the tenth i want a good  
script out of this that we  
can start rehearsals on  
not too big a cast  
and not too much of your  
damned poetry either  
you know your old  
familiar line of hokum  
they eat up that falstaff stuff  
of yours ring him in again  
and give them a good ghost  
or two and remember we gotta  
have something dick burbage can get  
his teeth into and be sure  
and stick in a speech  
somewhere the queen will take  
for a personal compliment and if  
you get in a line or two somewhere  
about the honest english yeoman  
it s always good stuff  
and it s a pretty good stunt  
bill to have the heavy villain  
a moor or a dago or a jew  
or something like that and say  
i want another  
comic welshman in this  
but i don t need to tell  
you bill you know this game  
just some of your ordinary  
hokum and maybe you could  
kill a little kid or two a prince  
or something they like  
a little pathos along with  
the dirt now you better see burbage



archy and mehitabel

tonight and see what he wants  
in that part oh says bill  
to think i am  
debasing my talents with junk  
like that oh god what i wanted  
was to be a poet  
and write sonnet serials  
like a gentleman should

well says i pete  
bill s plays are highly  
esteemed to this day  
is that so says pete  
poor mutt little he would  
care what poor bill wanted  
was to be a poet

archy

archy confesses

coarse  
jacosity  
catches the crowd  
shakespeare  
and i  
are often  
low browed

the fish wife  
curse  
and the laugh  
of the horse  
shakespeare  
and i  
are frequently  
coarse

aesthetic  
excuses  
in bill s behalf  
are adduced  
to refine  
big bill s  
coarse laugh

but bill  
he would chuckle

archy and mehitabel

to hear such guff  
he pulled  
rough stuff  
and he liked  
rough stuff

hoping you  
are the same  
archy



xxx

the old trouper

i ran onto mehitabel again  
last evening  
she is inhabiting  
a decayed trunk  
which lies in an alley  
in greenwich village  
in company with the  
most villainous tom cat  
i have ever seen  
but there is nothing  
wrong about the association  
archy she told me  
it is merely a plutonic  
attachment  
and the thing can be  
believed for the tom  
looks like one of pluto s demons  
it is a theatre trunk  
archy mehitabel told me  
and tom is an old theatre cat  
he has given his life  
to the theatre  
he claims that richard  
mansfield once  
kicked him out of the way  
and then cried because  
he had done it and

archy and mehitabel

petted him  
and at another time  
he says in a case  
of emergency  
he played a bloodhound  
in a production of  
uncle tom s cabin  
the stage is not what it  
used to be tom says  
he puts his front paw  
on his breast and says  
they don t have it any more  
they don t have it here  
the old troupers are gone  
there s nobody can troupe  
any more  
they are all amateurs nowadays  
they haven t got it  
here  
there are only  
five or six of us oldtime  
troupers left  
this generation does not know  
what stage presence is  
personality is what they lack  
personality  
where would they get  
the training my old friends  
got in the stock companies  
i knew mr booth very well  
says tom  
and a law should be passed  
preventing anybody else  
from ever playing  
in any play he ever  
played in  
there was a trouper for you  
i used to sit on his knee

archy and mehitabel

and purr when i was  
a kitten he used to tell me  
how much he valued my opinion  
finish is what they lack  
finish  
and they haven t got it  
here  
and again he laid his paw  
on his breast  
i remember mr daly very  
well too  
i was with mr daly s company  
for several years  
there was art for you  
there was team work  
there was direction  
they knew the theatre  
and they all had it  
here  
for two years mr daly  
would not ring up the curtain  
unless i was in the  
prompter s box  
they are amateurs nowadays  
rank amateurs all of them  
for two seasons i played  
the dog in joseph  
jefferson s rip van winkle  
it is true i never came  
on the stage  
but he knew i was just off  
and it helped him  
i would like to see  
one of your modern  
theatre cats  
act a dog so well  
that it would convince



archy and mehitabel

a trouper like jo jefferson  
but they haven t got it  
nowadays  
they haven t got it  
here  
jo jefferson had it he had it  
here  
i come of a long line  
of theatre cats  
my grandfather  
was with forrest  
he had it he was a real trouper  
my grandfather said  
he had a voice  
that used to shake  
the ferryboats  
on the north river  
once he lost his beard  
and my grandfather  
dropped from the  
fly gallery and landed  
under his chin  
and played his beard  
for the rest of the act  
you don t see any theatre  
cats that could do that  
nowadays  
they haven t got it they  
haven t got it  
here  
once i played the owl  
in modjeska s production  
of macbeth  
i sat above the castle gate  
in the murder scene  
and made my yellow  
eyes shine through the dusk  
like an owl s eyes



MEHITABEL, HE SAYS —

archy and mehitabel

modjeska was a real  
trouper she knew how to pick  
her support i would like  
to see any of these modern  
theatre cats play the owl s eyes  
to modjeska s lady macbeth  
but they haven t got it nowadays  
they haven t got it  
here

mehitabel he says  
both our professions  
are being ruined  
by amateurs

archy

## archy declares war

i am going to start  
a revolution  
i saw a kitchen  
worker killing  
water bugs with poison  
hunting pretty  
little roaches  
down to death  
it set my blood to  
boiling  
i thought of all  
the massacres and slaughter  
of persecuted insects  
at the hands of cruel humans  
and i cried  
aloud to heaven  
and i knelt  
on all six legs  
and vowed a vow  
of vengeance  
i shall organize the insects  
i shall drill them  
i shall lead them  
i shall fling a billion  
times a billion billion  
risen insects in an army

archy and mehitabel

at the throats  
of all you humans  
unless you sign the papers  
for a damn site better treatment  
volunteers volunteers  
hearken to my calling  
fifty million flies  
are wanted may the first  
to die in marmalade  
curses curses curses  
on the cruel human race  
does not the poor mosquito  
love her little offspring  
that you swat against the wall  
out of equatorial  
swamps and fever jungles  
come o mosquitoes  
a billion billion strong  
and sting a billion baldheads  
till they butt against each other  
and break like egg shells  
caterpillars locusts  
grasshoppers gnats  
vampire moths  
black legged spiders  
with red hearts of hell  
centipedes and scorpions  
little gingery ants  
come come come  
come you tarantulas  
with fury in your feet  
bloodsuckers wriggle  
out of the bayous  
ticks cooties hornets  
give up your pleasures  
all your little trivial  
sunday school picnics  
this is war



archy and mehitabel

in earnest  
and red revolution  
come in a cloud  
with a sun hiding miracle  
of small deadly wings  
swarm stab and bite  
what we want is justice  
curses curses curses  
over land air and water  
whirl in a million  
sweeping and swaying  
cyclonic dances  
whirl high and swoop  
down on the cities  
like a comet bearing death  
in the loop and flick  
of its tail  
little little creatures  
out of all your billions  
make great dragons  
that lie along the sky  
and war with the sunset  
and eat up the moon  
draw all the poison  
from the evil stars  
and spit it on the earth  
remember every planet  
pivots on an atom  
and so you are strong  
i swear by the great  
horned toad of mithridates  
i swear by the vision  
of whiskered old pythagoras  
that i am very angry  
i am mad as hell  
for i have seen a soapy  
kitchen mechanic  
murdering my brothers



archy and mehitabel

slaying little roaches  
pathetic in their innocence  
damn her red elbows  
damn her spotted apron  
damn her steamy hair  
damn her dull eyes  
that look like a pair  
of little pickled onions  
curses curses curses  
i even heard her praised  
for undertaking murder  
on her own volition  
and called the only perfect  
cook in the city  
come come come  
come in your billions  
tiny small feet  
and humming little wings  
crawlers and creepers  
wigglers and stingers  
scratchers borers slitherers  
little forked tongues  
man is at your mercy  
one sudden gesture  
and all his empires perish  
rise  
strike for freedom  
curses on the species  
that invented roach poison  
curses on the stingy  
beings that evolved  
tight zinc covers  
that you can t crawl under  
for their garbage cans  
come like a sandstorm  
spewed from the mouth  
of a great apocalyptic  
desert making devil

archy and mehitabel

come like the spray  
sooty and fiery  
snorted from the nostrils  
of a sky eating ogre  
let us have a little  
direct action is the  
sincere wish of

archy

the hen and the oriole

well boss did it  
ever strike you that a  
hen regrets it just as  
much when they wring her  
neck as an oriole but  
nobody has any  
sympathy for a hen because  
she is not beautiful  
while every one gets  
sentimental over the  
oriole and says how  
shocking to kill the  
lovely thing this thought  
comes to my mind  
because of the earnest  
endeavor of a  
gentleman to squash me  
yesterday afternoon when i  
was riding up in the  
elevator if i had been a  
butterfly he would have  
said how did that  
beautiful thing happen to  
find its way into  
these grimy city streets do  
not harm the splendid  
creature but let it

archy and mehitabel

fly back to its rural  
haunts again beauty always  
gets the best of  
it be beautiful boss  
a thing of beauty is a  
joy forever  
be handsome boss and let  
who will be clever is  
the sad advice  
of your ugly little friend

archy

xxxiii

ghosts

you want to know  
whether i believe in ghosts  
of course i do not believe in them  
if you had known  
as many of them as i have  
you would not  
believe in them either  
perhaps i have been  
unfortunate in my acquaintance  
but the ones i have known  
have been a bad lot  
no one could believe in them  
after being acquainted with them  
a short time  
it is true that i have met  
them under peculiar  
circumstances  
that is while they  
were migrating into the  
bodies of what human beings  
consider a lower order  
of creatures  
before i became a cockroach  
i was a free verse poet  
one of the pioneers of the artless art  
and my punishment for that  
was to have my soul

archy and mehitabel

enter the body of a cockroach  
the ghosts i have known  
were the ghosts of persons  
who were waiting for a vacant  
body to get into  
they knew they were going  
to transmigrate into the bodies of  
lizards lice bats snakes  
worms beetles mice alley cats  
turtles snails tadpoles  
etcetera  
and while they were waiting  
they were as cross as all get out  
i remember talking to one of them  
who had just worked his way  
upward again he had been in the  
body of a flea and he was going  
into a cat fish  
you would think he might be  
grateful for the promotion  
but not he  
i do not call this much of an advance  
he said why could i not  
be a humming bird or something  
kid i told him it will  
take you a million years to work your  
way up to a humming bird  
when i remember he said  
that i used to be a hat check boy  
in a hotel i could  
spend a million years weeping  
to think that i should come to this  
we have all seen better days i said  
we have all come down in the world  
you have not come down as far  
as some of us  
if i ever get to be a hat check boy  
again he said i will sting



archy and mehitabel

somebody for what i have had to suffer  
that remark will probably cost you  
another million years among  
the lower creatures i told him  
transmigration is a great thing  
if you do not weaken  
personally my ambition is to get  
my time as a cockroach shortened for  
good behavior and be promoted  
to a revenue officer  
it is not much of a step up but  
i am humble  
i never ran across any of this  
ectoplasm that sir arthur  
conan doyle tells of but it sounds  
as if it might be wonderful  
stuff to mend broken furniture with  
archy

## archy hears from mars

at eleven o clock  
p m on last saturday evening  
i received the following  
message on my  
own private radio set  
good evening little archibald  
and how are you  
this is mars speaking  
i replied at once  
whom or who  
as the case may be  
do i know on mars  
every one here is familiar  
with your work archy  
was the answer  
and we feel well repaid  
for all the trouble we have had  
in getting in touch  
with your planet  
thank you i replied  
i would rather hear  
mars say that  
than any other planet  
mars has always been  
one of my favorite planets  
it is sweet of you  
to think that way about us

archy and mehitabel

said mars  
and so we continued to pay  
each other interstellar  
compliments  
what is or are  
thirty five million miles  
between kindred souls  
tell us all about  
your planet said mars  
well i said it is  
round like an orange  
or a ball  
and it is all cluttered  
up with automobiles  
and politicians  
it doesn't know where it is  
going nor why  
but it is in a hurry  
it is in charge of a  
two legged animal called  
man who is genuinely  
puzzled as to whether  
his grandfather was a god  
or a monkey  
i should think said mars  
that what he is himself  
would make more difference  
than what his grandfather was  
not to this animal i replied  
he is the great alibi ike of  
the cosmos when he raises hell  
just because he feels like  
raising hell  
he wants somebody to blame it on  
can't anything be done about him  
said mars  
i am doing the best i can  
i answered

archy and mehitabel

but after all i am only one  
and my influence is limited  
you are too modest archy  
said mars  
we all but worship you  
here on this planet  
a prophet said i is not  
without honor save on his own  
planet wait a minute  
said mars  
i want to write that down  
that is one of your best things  
archy is it original  
it was once i answered truthfully  
and may be again  
won t you tell us a little  
something said mars  
about yourself what you look like  
and what you think  
is the best thing you have written  
and your favorite games  
and that sort of thing  
well i said i am brunette  
and stand over six feet  
without any shoes on  
the best skits i have done  
were some little plays  
i dashed off  
under the general title  
of shakespeare s plays  
and my favorite sport is theology  
you must meet  
a great many interesting people  
said mars  
oh yes i said one becomes  
accustomed to that after a while  
what is your favorite dish  
said mars and do you believe

archy and mehitabel

in the immortality of the soul  
stew i said and yes  
at least mine is immortal  
but i could name several others  
that i have my doubts about  
is there anything else  
of interest about your planet  
which you wish to tell your  
many admirers on mars  
asked mars  
there is very little else  
of any real interest i said  
and now will you tune out  
and let me do some work  
you people who say you admire  
my work are always butting in  
and taking up my time  
how the hell can i get any  
serious literary work done  
if you keep bothering me  
all the time now you get off  
the ether and let me do some  
deep thinking  
you might add that i am shy  
and loathe publicity

archy

mehitabel dances with boreas

well boss i saw mehitabel  
last evening  
she was out in the alley  
dancing on the cold cobbles  
while the wild december wind  
blew through her frozen whiskers  
and as she danced  
she wailed and sang to herself  
uttering the fragments  
that rattled in her cold brain  
in part as follows

whirl mehitabel whirl  
spin mehitabel spin  
thank god you re a lady still  
if you have got a frozen skin

blow wind out of the north  
to hell with being a pet  
my left front foot is brittle  
but there s life in the old dame yet

dance mehitabel dance  
caper and shake a leg  
what little blood is left  
will fizz like wine in a keg



archy and mehitabel

wind come out of the north  
and pierce to the guts within  
but some day mehitabel s guts  
will string a violin

moon you re as cold as a frozen  
skin of yellow banan  
that sticks in the frost and ice  
on top of a garbage can

and you throw a shadow so chilly  
that it can scarcely leap  
dance shadow dance  
you ve got no place to sleep

whistle a tune north wind  
on my hollow marrow bones  
i ll dance the time with three good feet  
here on the alley stones

freeze you bloody december  
i never could stay a pet  
but i am a lady in spite of hell  
and there s life in the old dame yet

whirl mehitabel whirl  
flirt your tail and spin  
dance to the tune your guts will cry  
when they string a violin

eight of my lives are gone  
it s years since my fur was slicked  
but blow north wind blow  
i m damned if i am licked

girls we was all of us ladies  
we was o wotthehell  
and once a lady always game  
by crikey blood will tell



o... YOU GOTTA DANCE  
TILL THE SUN COMES  
UP .....

archy and mehitabel

i might be somebody s pet  
asleep by the fire on a rug  
but me i was always romantic  
i had the adventurous bug

caper mehitabel caper  
leap shadow leap  
you gotto dance till the sun comes up  
for you got no place to sleep

i might have been many a tom cat s wife  
but i got no regret  
i lived my life as i liked my life  
and there s pep in the old dame yet

blow wind out of the north  
you cut like a piece of tin  
slice my guts into fiddle strings  
and we ll have a violin

spin mehitabel spin  
you had a romantic past  
and you re gonna cash in dancing  
when you are croaked at last

i will not eat tomorrow  
and i did not eat today  
but wotthehell i ask you  
the word is toujours gai

whirl mehitabel whirl  
i once was a maltese pet  
till i went and got abducted  
and cripes i m a lady yet

whirl mehitabel whirl  
and show your shadow how  
tonight it s dance with the bloody moon  
tomorrow the garbage scow

archy and mehitabel

whirl mehitabel whirl  
spin shadow spin  
the wind will pipe on your marrow bones  
your slats are a mandolin

by cripes i have danced the shimmy  
in rooms as warm as a dream  
and gone to sleep on a cushion  
with a bellyfull of cream

it s one day up and next day down  
i led a romantic life  
it was being abducted so many times  
as spoiled me for a wife

dance mehitabel dance  
till your old bones fly apart  
i ain t got any regrets  
for i gave my life to my art

whirl mehitabel whirl  
caper my girl and grin  
and pick at your guts with your frosty feet  
they re the strings of a violin

girls we was all of us ladies  
until we went and fell  
and oncet a thoroughbred always game  
i ask you wotthehell

it s last week up and this week down  
and always the devil to pay  
but cripes i was always the lady  
and the word is toujours gai

be a tabby tame if you want  
somebody s pussy and pet  
the life i led was the life i liked  
and there s pep in the old dame yet

archy and mehitabel

whirl mehitabel whirl  
leap shadow leap  
you gotto dance till the sun comes up  
for you got no place to sleep

archy

xxxvi

archy at the zoo

the centipede adown the street  
goes braggartly with scores of feet  
a gaudy insect but not neat

the octopus s secret wish  
is not to be a formal fish  
he dreams that some time he may grow  
another set of legs or so  
and be a broadway music show

oh do not always take a chance  
upon an open countenance  
the hippopotamus s smile  
conceals a nature full of guile

human wandering through the zoo  
what do your cousins think of you

i worry not of what the sphinx  
thinks or maybe thinks she thinks  
i have observed a setting hen  
arise from that same attitude  
and cackle forth to chicks and men  
some quite superfluous platitude



archy and mehitabel

serious camel sad giraffe  
are you afraid that if you laugh  
those graceful necks will break in half

a lack of any mental outlet  
dictates the young cetacean s spoutlet  
he frequent blows like me and you  
because there s nothing else to do

when one sees in the austral dawn  
a wistful penguin perched upon  
a bald man s bleak and desert dome  
one knows tis yearning for its home

the quite irrational ichneumon  
is such a fool it s almost human

despite the sleek shark s far flung grin  
and his pretty dorsal fin  
his heart is hard and black within  
even within a dentist s chair  
he still preserves a sinister air  
a prudent dentist always fills  
himself with gas before he drills

archy

## the dissipated hornet

well boss i had a  
great example of the corrupting  
influence of the great  
city brought to my notice recently a  
drunken hornet blew in here  
the other day and sat down in the  
corner and dozed and buzzed not a  
real sleep you know one of those wakeful  
liquor trances with the  
fuzzy talk oozing out of it to hear  
this guy mumble in his dreams he was right  
wicked my name he says is crusty bill  
i never been licked and i never will and  
then he would go half way asleep  
again nobody around here wanted to  
fight him and after a while he got  
sober enough to know how drunk he had  
been and began to cry over it and get  
sentimental about himself mine is a wasted  
life he says but i had a good  
start red liquor ruined me he says and  
sobbed tell me your story i  
said two years ago he said i was a country  
hornet young and strong and handsome i  
lived in a rusty rainspout with my  
parents and brothers and sisters and all was  
innocent and merry often in that happy

archy and mehitabel

pastoral life would we swoop down  
with joyous laughter and sting the school  
children on the village green but on an evil  
day alas i came to the city in a crate  
of peaches i found myself in a market  
near the water front alone and friendless in the  
great city its ways were strange to  
me food seemed inaccessible i thought  
that i might starve to death as i was buzzing  
down the street thinking these gloomy  
thoughts i met another hornet  
just outside a speakeasy kid he says  
you look down in the mouth forget  
it kid i will show you how to live without  
working how i says watch me he says just  
then a drunken fly came crawling out  
of the bar room in a leisurely way my new  
found friend stung dissected and consumed that fly  
that s the way he says smacking his lips  
this is the life that was a beer fly  
wait and i will get you a cocktail fly this  
is the life i took up that life alas the  
flies around a bar room get so drunk drinking  
what is spilled that they are helpless all a  
hornet has to do is wait calmly until  
they come staggering out and there is his  
living ready made for him at first being  
young and innocent i ate only beer flies but  
the curse of drink got me the mad life began  
to tell upon me i got so i would not eat a  
fly that was not full of some strong and heady  
liquor the lights and life got me i would  
not eat fruits and vegetables any more i scorned  
flies from a soda fountain  
they seemed flat and insipid to me  
finally i got so wicked that i  
went back to the country and got six innocent  
young hornets and brought them back

archy and mehitabel

to the city with me i started them in the  
business i debauched them and  
they caught my flies for me now i am in  
an awful situation my six hornets from the  
country have struck and set up on their own  
hook i have to catch my flies myself  
and my months of idleness and  
dissipation have spoiled my technique i  
can t catch a fly now unless he is dead drunk  
what is to become of me alas the curse  
of alcoholic beverages especially with each  
meal well i said it is a sad story  
bill and of a sort only too  
common in this day of ours it is he says i  
have the gout in my stinger so bad  
that i scream with pain every time i spear  
a fly i got into a safe place on the  
inside of the typewriter and yelled out at him  
my advice is suicide bill all the time  
he had been pitying himself my sympathy had  
been with the flies

archy

xxxviii

unjust

poets are always asking  
where do the little roses go  
underneath the snow  
but no one ever thinks to say  
where do the little insects stay  
this is because  
as a general rule  
roses are more handsome  
than insects  
beauty gets the best of it  
in this world  
i have heard people  
say how wicked it was  
to kill our feathered  
friends  
in order to get  
their plumage and pinions  
for the hats of women  
and all the while  
these same people  
might be eating duck  
as they talked  
the chances are  
that it is just as discouraging  
to a duck to have  
her head amputated  
in order to become

archy and mehitabel

a stuffed roast fowl  
and decorate a dining table  
as it is for a bird  
of gayer plumage  
to be bumped  
off the running board of existence  
to furnish plumage  
for a lady s hat  
but the duck  
does not get the sympathy  
because the duck  
is not beautiful  
the only insect  
that succeeds in getting  
mourned is a moth  
or butterfly  
whereas every man s  
heel is raised against  
the spider  
and it is getting harder  
and harder for spiders  
to make an honest living  
at that since  
human beings have invented  
so many ways  
of killing flies  
humanity will shed poems  
full of tears  
over the demise of  
a bounding doe  
or a young gazelle  
but the departure of a trusty  
camel leaves the  
vast majorities  
stonily indifferent  
perhaps the theory is  
that god would not have made  
the camel so ugly



archy and mehitabel

if the camel were not wicked  
alas exclamation point  
the pathos of ugliness  
is only perceived  
by us cockroaches of the world  
and personally  
i am having to stand for a lot  
i am getting it double  
as you might say  
before my soul  
migrated into the body  
of a cockroach  
it inhabited the carcase  
of a vers libre poet  
some vers libre poets are beautiful  
but i was not  
i had a little blond mustache  
that every one thought was a mistake  
and yet since i have died  
i have thought of that  
with regret  
it hung over a mouth  
that i found it difficult to keep closed  
because of adenoidal trouble  
but it would have been better  
if i could have kept it closed  
because the teeth within  
were out of alignment  
and were of odd sizes  
this destroyed my acoustics  
as you might say  
my chin was nothing much  
and knew it  
and timidly shrank  
into itself  
receding from the battle of life  
my eyes were all right  
but my eyebrows

archy and mehitabel

were scarcely noticeable  
i suppose though that if  
i had had noticeable eyebrows  
they would have been wrong  
somehow  
well well not to pursue  
this painful subject  
to the uttermost and ultimate  
wart and freckle  
i was not handsome and it hampered  
me when i was a human  
it militated against me  
as a poet  
more beautiful creatures could  
write verse worse than mine  
and get up and recite it  
with a triumphant air  
and get away with it  
but my sublimest ideas  
were thought to be a total  
loss when people saw  
where they came from  
i think it would have been  
only justice  
if i had been sent to inhabit  
a butterfly  
but there is very little  
justice in the universe  
what is the use  
of being the universe  
if you have to be just  
interrogation point  
and i suppose the universe  
had so much really important  
business on hand  
that it finds it impossible  
to look after the details  
it is rushed

archy and mehitabel

perhaps it has private  
knowledge to the effect  
that eternity is brief  
after all  
and it wants to get the big  
jobs finished in a hurry  
i find it possible to forgive  
the universe  
i meet it in a give and take spirit  
although i do wish  
that it would consult me at times  
please forgive  
the profundity of these  
meditations  
whenever i have nothing  
particular to say  
i find myself always  
always plunging into cosmic  
philosophy  
or something

archy

archy and mehitabel

killed off mercutio so  
early in the play it is only  
hamlet that can  
find material for five acts  
cheer up cheer up cheer up he  
says bo i told him i  
wish i was the  
woolworth tower i would fall  
on you cheer up cheer up cheer  
up he says again

archy

## clarence the ghost

the longer i live the more i  
realize that everything is  
relative even morality is  
relative things you would not do  
sometimes you would do other  
times for instance i would not consider  
it honorable in me as a  
righteous cockroach to crawl into a  
near sighted man s soup that  
man would not have a sporting chance but  
with a man with ordinarily good eye  
sight i should say it was  
up to him to watch his soup himself and  
yet if i was very tired and hungry  
i would crawl into even a near  
sighted man s soup knowing all the  
time it was wrong and my necessity would  
keep me from reproaching myself too  
bitterly afterwards you can  
not make any hard and fast rule  
concerning the morality of crawling into  
soup nor anything else a certain  
alloy of expediency improves the  
gold of morality and makes  
it wear all the longer consider a  
ghost if i were a ghost i

archy and mehitabel

would not haunt ordinary people but i  
would have all the fun i wanted to with  
spiritualists for spiritualists are  
awful nuisances to ghosts i knew a  
ghost by the name of clarence one  
time who hated spiritualists with a  
great hatred you see said clarence they  
give me no rest they have got my  
number once one of those psychics gets a



ALL A SPOOK HAS TO DO  
IS STICK AROUND.  
HERRICK



archy and mehitabel

ghost s number so he has to come  
when he is called they work him till  
the astral sweat stands out in beads  
on his spectral brow they seem to think  
said clarence that all a spook has to do  
is to stick around waiting to dash in  
with a message as to whether mrs millionbucks  
pet pom has pneumonia or only wheezes  
because he has been eating too many  
squabs clarence was quite  
bitter about it but wait he says till  
the fat medium with the red nose  
that has my number  
passes over and i can get my  
clutches on him on equal terms there s  
going to be some initiation beside  
the styx several of the boys are  
sore on him a plump chance i have  
don t i to improve myself and pass on  
to another star with that medium  
yanking me into somebody s parlor to  
blow through one of these little tin  
trumpets any time of the day or night  
honest archy he says i hate the sight of a  
ouija board would it be moral he  
says to give that goof a bum tip on the  
stock market life ain t worth  
dying he says if you ve got to fag  
for some chinless chump of a psychic  
nor death ain t worth living  
through would it be moral in me to  
queer that simp with his  
little circle by saying he s got an  
anonymous diamond brooch in his pocket  
and that his trances are rapidly developing  
his kleptomania no clarence i said it  
wouldn t be moral but it

archy and mehitabel

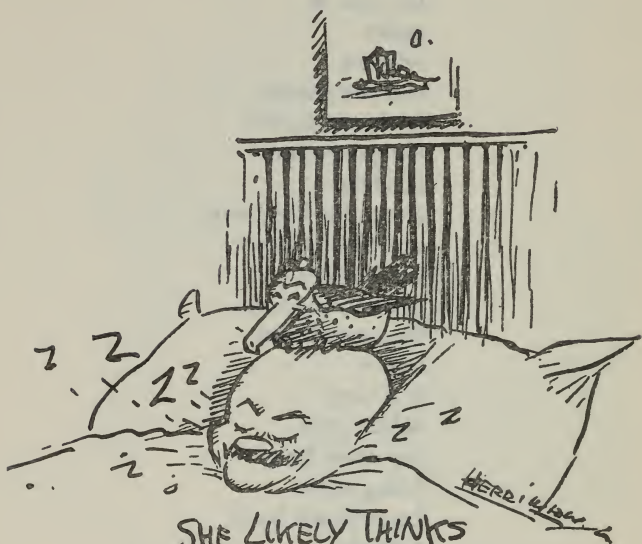
might be expedient there s a ghost  
around here i have been trying to get  
acquainted with but he is shy i think he is  
probably afraid of cockroaches

archy

## some natural history

the patagonian  
penguin  
is a most  
peculiar  
bird  
he lives on  
pussy  
willows  
and his tongue  
is always furred  
the porcupine  
of chile  
sleeps his life away  
and that is how  
the needles  
get into the hay  
the argentinian  
oyster  
is a very  
subtle gink  
for when he s  
being eaten  
he pretends he is  
a skink  
when you see  
a sea gull  
sitting

archy and mehitabel  
on a bald man s dome  
she likely thinks  
she s nesting  
on her rocky  
island home  
do not tease  
the inmates  
when strolling  
through the zoo  
for they have  
their finer feelings  
the same  
as me and you  
oh deride not



SHE LIKELY THINKS  
SHE'S NESTING  
ON HER ROCKY  
ISLAND HOME.

archy and mehitabel  
the camel  
if grief should  
make him die  
his ghost will come  
to haunt you  
with tears  
in either eye  
and the spirit of  
a camel  
in the midnight gloom  
can be so very  
cheerless  
as it wanders  
round the room  
archy

xlii

prudence

i do not think a prudent one  
will ever aim too high  
a cockroach seldom whips a dog  
and seldom should he try

and should a locust take a vow  
to eat a pyramid  
he likely would wear out his teeth  
before he ever did

i do not think the prudent one  
hastes to initiate  
a sequence of events which he  
lacks power to terminate

for should i kick the woolworth tower  
so hard i laid it low  
it probably might injure me  
if it fell on my toe

i do not think the prudent one  
will be inclined to boast  
lest circumstances unforeseen  
should get him goat and ghost



archy and mehitabel

for should i tell my friends i d drink  
the hudson river dry  
a tidal wave might come and turn  
my statements to a lie

archy

## archy goes abroad

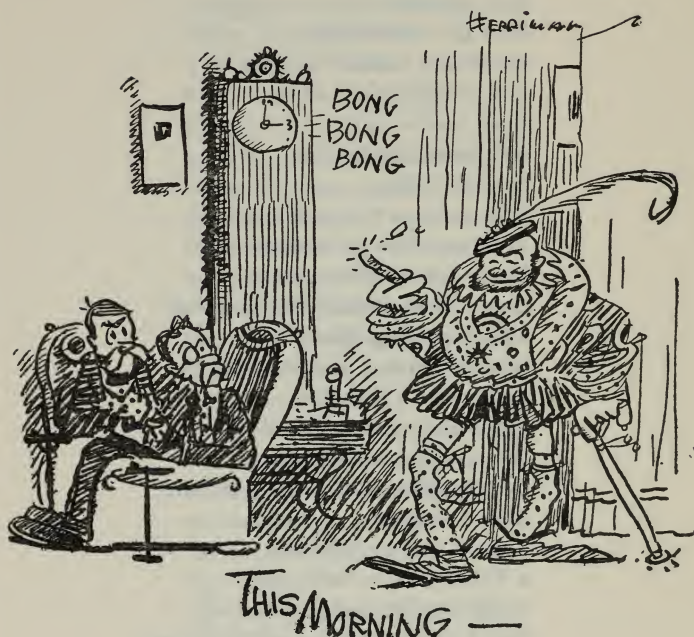
london england  
since i have been  
residing in westminster  
abbey i have learned  
a secret that i desire  
to pass on to the psychic  
sharps it is this  
until the body of a human  
being perishes utterly  
the spirit is not  
released from its vicinity  
so long as there is any  
form left in the physical  
part of it the ghost cannot go  
to heaven or to hell  
the ancient greeks  
understood this and they  
burned the body very often  
so that the spirit could  
get immediate release  
the ancient egyptians  
also knew it  
but they reacted differently  
to the knowledge  
they embalmed the body  
so that the form would  
persist for thousands

archy and mehitabel

of years and the ghost would have  
to stick around for a time  
here in westminster abbey  
there are hundreds of  
ghosts that have not yet  
been released  
some of them are able to wander  
a few miles away  
and some of them cannot  
go further than a few hundred  
yards from the graves  
where the bodies lie  
for the most part they make  
the best of it  
they go out on little  
excursions around london  
and at night they sit on  
their tombs and  
tell their experiences  
to each other  
it is perhaps the most  
exclusive club in london  
henry the eighth came in  
about three o clock this morning  
after rambling about  
piccadilly for a couple of hours  
and i wish i had the  
space to report in detail  
the ensuing conversation  
between him and charles dickens  
now and then  
a ghost can so influence  
a living person that you  
might say he had grabbed off  
that living person s body and was  
using it as his own  
edward the black prince  
was telling the gang

archy and mehitabel

the other evening  
that he had been leading the life  
of a city clerk for three weeks  
one of those birds  
with a top hat and a sack coat  
who come floating through  
the mist and drizzle



archy and mehitabel

with manuscript cases  
under their arms looking unreal  
even when they are not animated  
by ghosts edward the black prince  
who is known democratically  
as neddie black here  
says this clerk was a mild and  
humble wight when he took  
him over but he worked  
him up to the place where  
he assaulted a policeman  
saturday night then left him flat  
one of the most pathetic  
sights however  
is to see the ghost of queen  
victoria going out every  
evening with the ghost  
of a sceptre in her hand  
to find mr lytton strachey  
and bean him it seems she beans  
him and beans him and he  
never knows it  
and every night on the stroke  
of midnight elizabeth tudor  
is married to walter raleigh by that  
eminent clergyman  
dr lawrence sterne  
the gang pulls a good many  
pageants which are written  
by ben jonson but i think  
the jinks will not be properly  
planned and staged until  
j m barrie gets here  
this is the jolliest bunch  
i have met in london  
they have learned

archy and mehitabel

since they passed over  
that appearances and suety  
pudding are not all they were  
cracked up to be more anon from your little friend  
archy



xliv

archy at the tomb of napoleon

paris france  
i went over to  
the hotel des invalides  
today and gazed on  
the sarcophagus of the  
great napoleon  
and the thought came  
to me as i looked  
down indeed it  
is true napoleon  
that the best goods  
come in the smallest  
packages here are  
you napoleon with  
your glorious course  
run and here is  
archy just in the  
prime of his career  
with his greatest  
triumphs still before  
him neither one of us  
had a happy youth  
neither one of us  
was welcomed socially at  
the beginning of his  
career neither one of  
us was considered much

archy and mehitabel

to look at  
and in ten thousand years from  
now perhaps what you said and did  
napoleon will be  
confused with what  
archy said and did  
and perhaps the burial  
place of neither will be  
known napoleon looking  
down upon you  
i wish to ask you now  
frankly as one famous  
person to another  
has it been worth  
all the energy  
that we expended all the  
toil and trouble and  
turmoil that it cost us  
if you had your life  
to live over  
again bonaparte would  
you pursue the star  
of ambition  
i tell you frankly  
bonaparte that i myself  
would choose the  
humbler part  
i would put the temptation  
of greatness aside  
and remain an ordinary  
cockroach simple  
and obscure but alas  
there is a destiny that  
pushes one forward  
no matter how hard  
one may try to resist it  
i do not need to  
tell you about that

archy and mehitabel

bonaparte you know as  
much about it as i do  
yes looking at it in  
the broader way neither  
one of us has been to blame  
for what he has done  
neither for his great  
successes nor his great mistakes  
both of us napoleon  
were impelled by some  
mighty force external to  
ourselves we are both to  
be judged as great forces of  
nature as tools in the  
hand of fate rather than as  
individuals who willed to  
do what we have done  
we must be forgiven  
napoleon  
you and i  
when we have been  
different from the common  
run of creatures  
i forgive you as i know  
that you would forgive  
me could you speak to me  
and if you and i  
napoleon forgive and  
understand each other  
what matters it if all  
the world else find  
things in both of us that  
they find it hard  
to forgive and understand  
we have been  
what we have been  
napoleon and let them laugh that off  
well after an hour or so of

archy and mehitabel

meditation there i left  
actually feeling that i  
had been in communion  
with that great spirit and  
that for once in my  
life i had understood and been  
understood  
and i went away feeling  
solemn but likewise  
uplifted mehitabel the  
cat is missing

archy

mehitabel meets an affinity

paris france  
 mehitabel the cat  
 has been passing her  
 time in the dubious  
 company of  
 a ragged eared tom cat  
 with one mean  
 eye and the other  
 eye missing whom  
 she calls francy  
 he has been the hero  
 or the victim of  
 many desperate encounters  
 for part of his tail  
 has been removed  
 and his back has been chewed  
 to the spine  
 one can see at a glance  
 that he is a sneak thief  
 and an apache  
 a bandit with long  
 curved claws  
 you see his likes hanging  
 about the outdoor markets  
 here in paris waiting  
 their chance to sneak  
 a fish or a bit

archy and mehitabel

of unregarded meat  
or whimpering  
among the chair legs at the  
sidewalk cafes in the  
evenings or slinking  
down the gutters of  
alleys in the old  
quarters of the town  
he has a raucous voice  
much damaged by the night  
air and yet there is a  
sentimental wheedling  
note in it as well  
and yet withal he carries  
his visible disgrace with  
a jaunty air  
when i asked mehitabel  
where in the name of st denis  
did you pick up that  
romantic criminal  
in the luxembourg gardens  
she replied where  
we had both gone to kill  
birds he has been showing me  
paris he does not  
understand english but speak of  
him with respect  
he is like myself  
an example of the truth  
of the pythagorean idea  
you know that in my body  
which is that of a cat  
there is reincarnated  
the soul of cleopatra  
well this cat here  
was not always a cat either  
he has seen better days  
he tells me that once he was



archy and mehitabel

a bard and lived here in paris  
tell archy here  
something about yourself francy  
thus encouraged the  
murderous looking animal spoke  
and i append a  
rough translation of  
what he said

tame cats on a web of the persian woof  
may lick their coats and purr for cream  
but i am a tougher kind of goof  
scheming a freer kind of scheme  
daily i climb where the pigeons gleam  
over the gargoyles of notre dame  
robbing their nests to hear them scream  
for i am a cat of the devil i am

i ll tell the world i m a hard boiled oeuf  
i rend the clouds when i let off steam  
to the orderly life i cry pouf pouf  
it is worth far less than the bourgeois deem  
my life is a dance on the edge de l abime  
and i am the singer you d love to slam  
who murders the midnight anonyme  
for i am a cat of the devil i am

when the ribald moon leers over the roof  
and the mist reeks up from the chuckling stream  
i pad the quais on a silent hoof  
dreaming the vagabond s ancient dream  
where the piebald toms of the quartier teem  
and fight for a fish or a mouldy clam  
my rival i rip and his guts unseam  
for i am a cat of the devil i am

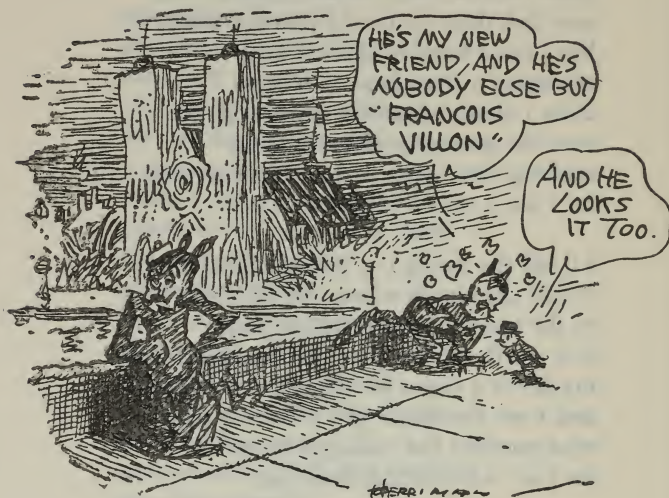
roach i could rattle you rhymes by the ream  
in proof of the fact that i m no spring lamb

archy and mehitabel

maybe the headsman will finish the theme  
for i am a cat of the devil i am

mehitabel i said  
your friend is nobody else  
than francois villon  
and he looks it too

archy



mehitabel sees paris

paris france  
 i have not been  
 to geneva but i have been  
 talking to a french cockroach  
 who has just returned  
 from there traveling all the  
 way in a third class  
 compartment he says there is no  
 hope for insect or man in  
 the league of nations  
 what prestige it ever had is gone  
 and it never had any  
 the idea of one great brotherhood  
 of men and insects on earth  
 is very attractive to me  
 but mehitabel the cat  
 says i am a communist an  
 anarchist and a socialist  
 she has been shocked to the soul  
 she says by what the  
 revolutionists did here during  
 the revolution  
 i am always the aristocrat archy  
 she said i may go and play  
 around montmartre and that sort  
 of thing and in fact i was  
 playing up there with francy last

archy and mehitabel

night but i am always the lady  
in spite of my little larks  
toujours gai archy and toujours  
the lady that is my motto in  
spite of  
ups and downs  
what they did to us aristocrats  
at the time of the revolution  
was a plenty archy  
it makes my heart bleed  
to see signs of it all  
over town those poor  
dear duchesses that got it  
in the neck i can sympathize  
with them archy i may not  
look it now but i come of a  
royal race myself  
i have come down in the world  
but wotthehell archy wotthehell  
jamais triste archy jamais triste  
that is my motto  
always the lady and always  
out for a good time  
francy and i lapped up  
a demi of beer in a joint  
up on the butte last night  
that an american tourist  
poured out for us  
and everybody laughed and it  
got to be the fashion up there  
to feed beer to us cats  
i did not get a vulgar souse  
archy no lady gets a vulgar  
souse wotthehell i hope i am above  
all vulgarity but i did get a  
little bit lit up  
and francy did too we came  
down and got on top of the

archy and mehitabel

new morgue and sang and did  
dances there  
francy seems to see  
something attractive about  
morgues when he gets lit up  
the old morgue he says was  
a more romantic morgue but  
vandal hands have torn it down  
but wotthell archy this one  
will do to dance on  
francy is showing me a side of  
paris he says tourists don't often  
get a look at he has a little  
love nest down in the  
catacombs where  
he and i are living now  
he and i go down there  
and do the tango amongst the  
bones he is really a most  
entertaining and agreeable  
companion archy and he has some  
very quaint ideas he is busy now  
writing a poem about  
us two cats filled with beer  
dancing among the bones  
sometimes i think francy  
is a little morbid  
when i see these lovely old places  
that us aristocrats built archy  
in the hands of the bourgeois it  
makes me almost wild  
but i try to bear up i try  
to bear up i find agreeable  
companions and put a good face  
on it toujours gai that is my  
motto toujours gai  
francy is a little bit done up  
today he tried to steal a



archy and mehitabel

partridge out of a frying  
pan in a joint up on the butte  
we went back there for more beer  
after our party  
at the morgue  
and the cook beaned him with  
a bottle poor francy i  
should hate to lose him  
but something tells me i should  
not stay a widow long  
there is something in the air  
of paris archy  
that makes one young again  
there s more than one  
dance in the old dame yet  
and with these words she  
put her tail in the air and  
capered off down the alley  
i am afraid we shall never  
get mehitabel back to america

archy



mehitabel in the catacombs

paris france  
 i would  
 fear greatly for the morals  
 of mehitabel the cat if she had any  
 the kind of life she  
 is leading is too violent  
 and undisciplined for words  
 she and the disreputable  
 tom cat who claims to have  
 been francois villon  
 when he was on earth  
 before have taken up their  
 permanent abode in the catacombs  
 whence they sally  
 forth nightly on excursions  
 of the most undignified nature  
 sometimes they honor  
 with their presence the cafes  
 of montparnasse and the boul mich  
 and sometimes they  
 seek diversion in the cabarets  
 on top of the butte  
 of montmartre  
 in these localities  
 it has become the fashion  
 among the humans

archy and mehitabel

to feed beer to these  
peculiar cats and they dance  
and caper when they have  
become well alcoholized  
with this beverage  
swinging their tails and  
indulging in raucous feline  
cries which they evidently  
mistake for a song  
it was my dubious  
privilege to see them  
when they returned to their  
abode early yesterday morning  
flushed as you might say  
with bocks and still  
in a holiday mood  
the catacombs of paris are  
not lined with the bones  
of saints and martyrs  
as are those of rome  
but nevertheless these cats  
should have more respect  
for the relics of mortality  
you may not believe me  
but they actually danced and  
capered among  
the skeletons while the cat  
who calls himself  
francois villon gave forth  
a chant of which the following  
is a free translation

outcast bones from a thousand biers  
click us a measure giddy and gleg  
and caper my children dance my dears  
skeleton rattle your mouldy leg  
this one was a gourmet round as a keg

archy and mehitabel

and that had the brow of semiramis  
o fleshless forehead bald as an egg  
all men s lovers come to this

this eyeless head that laughs and leers  
was a chass daf once or a touareg  
with golden rings in his yellow ears  
skeleton rattle your mouldy leg  
marot was this one or wilde or a wegg  
who dropped into verses and down the abyss  
and those are the bones of my old love meg  
all men s lovers come to this

these bones were a ballet girl s for years  
parbleu but she shook a wicked peg  
and those ribs there were a noble peer s  
skeleton rattle your mouldy leg  
and here is a duchess that loved a yegg  
with her lipless mouth that once drank bliss  
down to the dreg of its ultimate dreg  
all men s lovers come to this

prince if you pipe and plead and beg  
you may yet be crowned with a grisly kiss  
skeleton rattle your mouldy leg  
all men s lovers come to this

archy

off with the old love

paris france  
 i think  
 mehitabel the cat and the  
 outcast feline  
 who calls himself francois  
 villon are about to  
 quarrel and separate  
 mehitabel is getting tired  
 of living in the catacombs  
 she said to me  
 last evening  
 archy i sometimes wish  
 that francy s gaiety  
 did not so frequently take  
 a necrological turn  
 when francy is really happy  
 he always breaks  
 into a series of  
 lyric epitaphs  
 personally archy  
 i am a lady who can  
 be gay outside of  
 a mausoleum  
 as for morgues  
 and cemeteries i can  
 take them or i can  
 leave them alone

archy and mehitabel

just because some of my  
ancestors are now mummies  
i do not feel  
that i have to wait  
till i see a sarcophagus  
before i cheer up  
i can fall in love  
with a gentleman friend without  
speculating how he is going  
to look to the undertaker  
and when i want to sing  
a comic song  
i do not always feel  
impelled to hunt up a tomb  
for a stage  
i am a lady of refinement  
archy i have had my ups  
and downs and i have made  
a few false steps in life  
but i am toujours la grande dame  
archy always the lady  
old kid to hell with anything  
coarse or unrefined  
that has always been my motto  
and the truth is that this  
francy person has a yellow  
streak of commonness  
running through his poetic nature  
i fell for him archy  
but i feel there is trouble  
coming we had words last  
night over something no real  
gentleman would have noticed  
and the slob said to me  
mehitabel if you make eyes again  
at that tortoise shell  
cat over there i will slice  
your eyes out

archy and mehitabel

with a single sweep of my claws  
and toss them to the pigeons  
archy those are words  
that no gentleman would use  
or no lady would take  
you piebald fish thief  
i told him  
if i were not too refined  
i would rip you  
from the gullet to the mid riff  
it is lucky for you  
you frog eating four flush  
that i always remember  
my breeding  
otherwise you would be  
a candidate for what they call  
civet stew in paris  
something i won t stand for in a  
gentleman friend  
is jealousy of every other  
person who may be attracted to me  
by my gaiety and  
aristocratic manner  
and if i hear another word  
out of you  
i will can you first  
and kill you afterwards  
and then i will ignore you  
archy a gentleman  
with any real spirit  
would have swung on me  
when i said that  
but this quitter let me  
get away with it  
i clawed him a little archy  
just to show him i could  
and the goof stood for it  
no cat can hold me archy



archy and mehitabel

that lets me claw him without  
a come back i am a strong free  
spirit and i live my own  
life and only a masterful  
cave cat can hold my affections  
he must be a gentleman  
but he must also make me feel  
that he could be a  
wild cat if he would  
this francy person is neither  
one nor the other  
ah me archy i am afraid  
my little romance  
is drawing to a close  
and no meal ticket in sight  
either but what the hell archy  
a lady can always find friends  
it won t be the first time  
i have been alone in the world  
toujours gai archy  
that is my motto  
there s more than one dance  
in the old dame yet

archy

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161- "everything is relative -"

## Humor; Poetry

Don Marquis first introduced archy the cockroach and mehitabel, a cat in her ninth life, in his newspaper column, "The Sun Dial," in 1916. In a previous incarnation archy was a free-verse poet, while mehitabel's soul once belonged to Cleopatra. She is toujours gai, but archy is more philosophical. It is he who records their songs and observations on the boss's typewriter late at night. But he is not strong enough to make capital letters so it all comes out lower case:

the main question is  
whether the stuff is  
literature or not.

It is.

Cover by Paul Feigay

A Doubleday Dolphin Book

